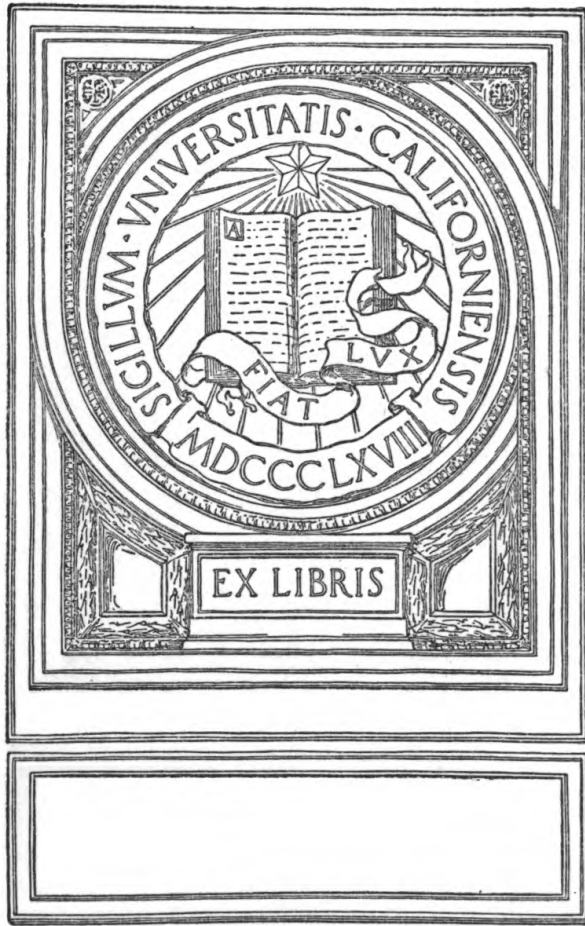


"Freely to Pass" : 474503 : "Freely to Pass"



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“Freely to Pass”

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EDWARD W. BEATTIE, JR.

THE
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FOREWORD

“I, the undersigned, Secretary of State of the United States of America, hereby request all whom it may concern to permit safely and freely to pass, and in case of need to give all lawful aid and protection to . . .”

(PREAMBLE TO AN AMERICAN PASSPORT)

THIS IS NOT a political “think piece.” It is not an effort to “tell all” about anything. It is simply the story of a passport, Number 474503, which started out normal length and grew considerably, as one assignment after another took me gradually around the world for the United Press.

By intention, it is not a detailed chronicle. It includes dates and names only where they were sufficiently important to stick in my mind. In the main, it is a somewhat disjointed series of recollections. Whatever thoughts found their way into the book are there purely incidentally, because they, like other incidents of a trip which lasted from September 3, 1937 to January 7, 1941, had sufficient impact to spring readily to mind when I

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thumbed through my passport the night before I surrendered it on a pier in Jersey City.

I hope that the fragmentary things which, for one reason or another, I cannot forget, will form a pattern of the existence of the corps of foreign correspondents who for the past few years have been trying to report honestly the greatest crisis of mankind.

I hope the picture the book provides will show that the business of foreign correspondence is not just a breathless round of bullet-dodging, censor baiting and general furor. It involves a lot of plain hard work and disappointment and unpleasantness. But it does provide a lot of very good companionship. And thank God, it has more than its share of laughs.

CHAPTER 1

PASSPORT 474503 began what might have been a normal existence on the sweltery noon of September 3, 1937 at the State Department in Washington. It was the usual thirty-two pages in length, with the familiar five pages of identification and exhortation—not to enlist in foreign armies, not to travel in warring Spain, and so on.

It was not invalidated for travel in China, the second current war zone, because Japan was my first objective, and it was a pretty good bet that assignment somewhere on the front would follow in due course. In a vague sort of way, I counted on six months or so in the Far East, then home. It was too bad about that fishing trip planned in Maine, where the landlocked salmon start taking the fly in late September. It was too bad to leave the Giants five games out of first place. But anyway, this was not going to be like the first foreign assignment, which stretched over four years in Europe and Africa.

During the next three years and four months, 474503 grew mightily. In just under two years, it was full. Then vice consuls scattered about Europe began adding accordion-pleated extensions, six pages at a time, to accommodate the extra

visas and the red-ink stamps. The Second World War had one immediate effect. Every third man in Europe blossomed forth with rubber stamp, ink-pad and the holy mission to turn your documents inside out, chew at them, and consecrate at least one page in each to his mark.

European sleeping-car porters, who have no rubber stamps but are equipped instead with indelible pencils of a very purple purple, scrawled berth numbers all over the title page. American consuls, who must feel a bit like the Old Sleuth in this year of grace, carefully studded six pages with thumb prints, validating the document successively for travel in various forbidden zones.

The inside back cover has a few telephone numbers, but I don't remember what city they refer to. One sheet bears the notation “5 to Jake,” which must be a bet; I don't know whether I won it or lost it, which is troublesome.

Number 474503 finally grew to ninety-two pages, and nobody, myself included, could find anything in it. Every border official who got his hands on it felt put upon. It had hung together around the world with the aid of considerable glue and a few yards of transparent stickum tape. But it was on its last legs when the immigration officer threw it on the pile at the dock in Jersey City.

It had never been out of my possession, except when various hotel porters scurried off with it to report to the police. Maybe the police, with their resources, were able to find what they wanted.

I still subconsciously put my hand into my breast pocket, two or three times a day, to see if it's in place.

As Lyle Wilson, who broke me into the press association business on Capitol Hill and who now is chief of the Washington bureau of the United Press, used to say, you could

count on the home office, every so often, coming up with something like: “It’s 5:45. Can you catch the 6:15 train for Vladivostock?”

That’s more or less the way I started for Tokyo.

I got word to go in New York, at 6 P. M. September 2, 1937. The ship was to sail from San Francisco at noon of the 5th. That left enough time to get a new passport in Washington, acquire a Japanese visa, get back to New York to pack, and catch the plane.

Mr. Suma, later the official spokesman of the Foreign Office in Tokyo, was then Counsellor of the Japanese Embassy in Washington. I was sitting in his office just after noon, next day, when the telephone rang. I never found out just what Mr. Suma was planning to tell me about Japan. New York was on the wire. The sailing had been changed. I had just twenty-four hours in which to reach San Francisco.

It meant catching a three o’clock plane from Newark, which was just possible if one passenger failed to turn up for the one o’clock plane out of Washington. One passenger did. The late Arch Rodgers, who was an expert at quick jumps for the UP, threw a lot of clothes into a couple of bags in New York.

I picked up the bags at Newark. The one which contained every suit I owned disappeared at 2 A. M. at Cheyenne, where I changed planes. It reappeared by a fluke at the airport in Salt Lake City. I bought some dress shirts in San Francisco. Their bosoms were all too short, which lent a W. C. Fieldsian touch around the V of my vest until I found a Japanese who would make new ones for \$1.25.

Arch had overlooked the vest to one suit. It was duly shipped, and by the time it caught up with me, in Berlin, the suit was worn out and I had thrown it away.

Six suitcases full of clothes have gone by the boards since

then. One of them disappeared in a train. I had to leave two in Warsaw because there was no room for them in the car when we left, with the Germans twenty miles away. They were gotten out as far as Berlin, and on the way to Copenhagen, when the Germans took over Denmark. Nobody knows where they are now. Two others, I hope, are still in the basement of a hotel in Amsterdam. When the war ends, I may get them. The other was in a friend's hotel room in Rome. I guess it's gone.

I have said good-by, I hope, to non-fitting Czechoslovak shirts, to Balkan shoes with built-in squeaks, to Finnish long woollies and the suit made in Bucharest.

I am tired of being a traveling rummage sale.

I made the S.S. *President Wilson* with ten minutes to spare. Then the ship waited five hours at the dock while owners and crew argued over a war-zone bonus or something.

So I had eight hours in San Francisco, a city I had never seen before; five of them were spent on the hot deck of a ship. I got nine in Honolulu, just enough for a ride to Waikiki and the Pali and a few yarns about the great fishing which waits for anyone who has the time. It was a foretaste of fifty places to come which I never learned to know beyond an airport, a station, or a hotel room and the press bureau.

CHAPTER 2

JAPAN is on page 9 of the passport: it's a big, dignified sort of visa, with a large circular stamp in a bold flower pattern. Leafing past it brings back a jumbled picture.

I spent only a month in Japan. As a country it is incredibly beautiful; where very bad modern architecture has been superimposed on an old, graceful life; where the food is extraordinarily bad to Western taste, except for two or three dishes which are extraordinarily good; where the people, the little men who turn out the cheap goods and fight the "incidents," are kind, and interested, and eager to be liked, and quite confused; and where the army clique which runs things at the moment never, in my experience, showed the slightest understanding of, or interest in, the rest of the world.

My first contact was with the reporters, who swarmed on board while the ship was still moving slowly up toward Yokohama and the white cone of Fuji gleamed hazily beyond the hills.

Reporters are always embarrassed if they're interviewed. It's particularly difficult in Japan, because Japanese newspapermen are good, and they ask the most embarrassing questions in the world.

Everyone was meat for them, the missionary families, the Catholic bishop from the interior of China, the fellow who had confided he was going on to China to join Chiang Kai-shek’s air force, and myself.

“You sympathize with the aims of the China incident, don’t you?”

“How do you like Japan?”

“The American people sympathize with our aims in China, don’t they?”

“Is America impressed with the feats of the Japanese army?”

“Will you write nice articles about Japan?”

I stuck to baseball, at first because everyone knows the Japanese love the game, then later with a singleness of purpose partly born of the fact that the Giants finally had passed the Cubs and partly from sheer desperation.

It was disconcerting to discover that nobody was paying any attention to baseball any more, and all the boys peering up over their notebooks kept plugging back at the “incident.” I never even hit the ball out of the infield. But the interviews with me were not used, and I was told later that I had the distinction of being the only arrival who had ever avoided print with complete success.

The second thing that happened was lima beans.

Ray Marshall, chief correspondent in Tokyo, met me at the dock in Yokohama with a chubby pink paper parcel under one arm. He seemed to be extremely pleased about something.

“I’ve got some lima beans,” he opened.

That sounds funny. It isn’t. It was simply a sidelight on the business of living abroad those days. In Berlin it was decent soap, in the China ports it was fresh celery, in the

Balkans it was shirts that fit, in London right now it's onions. Everywhere it was American cigarettes. And the average American living abroad will use an amazing amount of energy and ingenuity to get them.

Ray had found a place in Yokohama where, when he had an excuse to go there, he could get the beans. He was rightly pleased.

I found that the United Press office was a sunny corner room high up in the Domei building. It had only one drawback. It overlooked the railroad, two or three hundred yards away. Every so often, a small Domei messenger would rush into the room and start pulling down the shades.

That meant the imperial train was about to pass along the railroad tracks. In Japan nobody may look down on the Emperor. Only up at him.

On the same floor were most of the other British and American correspondents in town. There was the Tass correspondent, who according to popular rumor was always on the point either of being beaten up in some Tokyo alley or of being called back to Moscow for execution or exile to Siberia. He never went to press conferences. He was finally recalled to Moscow, but I trust the popular legend was not fulfilled. There was the late Jimmy Cox of Reuters, genial Englishman who went to press conferences much too often for the peace of mind of the spokesmen, for he specialized in awkward questions. Cox was later killed when he “jumped” from a window of police headquarters while being “questioned” by Japanese police. There were two Germans who could invariably dig up Hamburg beer in the most dingy alleyway bars. There was Pat Morin, of the Associated Press, who established himself as the best penny-pitcher in Japan. There was

Frank Hedges, a Midwesterner who radio-telephoned his news each night to the *Daily Telegraph* in London, but who had to let an Englishman do the job because no one at the other end could understand his accent.

Everyone was under more or less surveillance, but then that's a matter of course in Japan. You return to your hotel room, as I did, for instance, and discover everything perfectly in place except that your portable typewriter in its case is upside down on the desk. A typewriter case is just like a small suitcase, except that the lid is deep and the base shallow, a fact which apparently had escaped whoever replaced it.

Ray Marshall, who was on good terms with the Japanese authorities, got into trouble because of mistaken identity with Jim Marshall, of *Collier's* magazine, who was not exactly popular.

One day a detective appeared in the UP office.

“You are Jim Marshall?” he said with a polite hiss.

“No, I'm Ray Marshall.”

“That's the same, isn't it?”

“No, it's not.”

“But you write under the name of Jim Marshall?”

“No, I use my own.”

“Why don't you write under the name of Jim Marshall?”

Ray is a very patient man, and fifteen minutes later he succeeded in making his position clear. Next morning he got a wire from Jim Marshall, who had arrived unexpectedly in Kobe without a visa, and who wanted help in getting a permit to remain a few days in Japan. Pretty soon the detective arrived again.

“You say you are not Jim Marshall?” he began.

That took ten minutes more.

In fact the press conference at the Gaimusho, or Foreign Office, was the only steady contact between foreign press and government. Everyone at the Gaimusho was helpful. The spokesmen realized the value of a forceful statement. In Japan, you never had to worry about starting off a story with “Official circles studied the Roosevelt speech today, but there was no indication whether . . .” The Gaimusho saw to that.

But it was difficult, sometimes, to appreciate the point of Japanese denials. There was one occasion when a German liner had rescued the crew of a Chinese junk which had been sunk somewhere off Hong Kong, allegedly by the gunfire of a Japanese destroyer. Many of the Chinese were wounded. Someone brought the matter up in the press conference because it seemed, offhand, that an aged junk was hardly fit prey for modern three-inch guns.

“We have no full report,” the spokesman blandly replied, “but we are told the Chinese declared they had not been wounded by gunfire, but by the explosion of the turbines in their junk.”

That was the working side. The living side in Japan was pleasant, then. It has since become less so.

There was the vivid color of the streets, the geisha girls returning from the hairdresser's with their hair dressed to fit the performance of the evening, the scrape of wooden clogs on a wet pavement, the flowers and the street markets and the strange music. There was the hotel high up on a fantastically wooded mountain near Fuji, where the garden was full of tiny gnarled trees and the proprietor sported the longest set of mutton-chop whiskers seen since the days of Admiral Togo.

There were geisha parties where the songs and the samisens competed against the sizzle of the big iron pans of suki-yaki, broiling on the brazier in front of you. There were delicacies like a seaweed which reminded me of vulcanized rubber and looked like a roll of tire tape, or raw fish of a dozen kinds, not always easy to take.

The ham in Japan tasted of fish, usually, because the pigs were fed on it. Ray Marshall was always trying to interest someone in feeding pork to pet goldfish so he could get a decent bit of ham.

There were the peaceful temples where relatives prayed endlessly for the dead in China, and the glow of Japanese woodwork, and the flower arrangements, and the soft silk block prints.

There was endless propaganda for the campaign in China and for comforts for the troops leaving for the front. There were processions to celebrate victories, or to see the soldiers off. When a man left for the front from Tokyo, his firm always decorated its front entrance with a lovely display of flags and bright paper flowers and slogans, and everyone was particularly generous and courteous to him, and bowed very low, as he left for the mud of the Chinese paddy fields or the barren northern plains.

Everyone liked the way the “incident” was going, for the Japanese always “advanced,” and the papers were full of pictures of soldiers shouting banzais from the tops of captured walls. But it wasn’t very close to anyone, beyond the relatives of the ashes sent home in neat little white packages. It wasn’t very real to me, either, until I got orders to move on to Shanghai, early in October.

Since this was an “incident” and the army in the field a

“punitive expedition,” the Chinese consulate in Yokohama still functioned. I went down there for a visa. I also got one in Tokyo for Manchukuo, providing for entry by Shanhai-kwan, where the Great Wall of China dips its foot in the Yellow Sea.

When I left the Chinese consulate in Yokohama, a little man detached himself from a lamp post and strolled up. He was very polite and interested.

“Why do you go Chinese consulate?” he asked.

“Because I am going to Shanghai.”

“You have got visa?”

“Yes.”

“Ho ho. You never need visa. Japanese everywhere in Shanghai.”

The *Shanghai Maru* sailed from Kobe, where the bar of the Oriental Hotel sounds like a Pall Mall club—a sort of unofficial last outpost of the Empire. I shared a cabin aboard ship with a British policeman from Shanghai and a Siamese reporter who did nothing but smile and bow until we discovered that we both spoke German. He was very cautious about the pros and cons of the war, as behooves all citizens of small countries, these days.

We sailed out through a pearly haze which touched the sea, into what must be the most beautiful stretch of water on earth. The Inland Sea of Japan is a paradise of lush islands which seem to float on the surface, or just above it, like improbable blobs of deep green icing. In the sunset everything was overlaid with a gold shimmer. Then darkness fell, and the stars were outnumbered by the tiny lanterns which sprang up in thousands along the shore and wound

up the hills, and a moon came out to order and silhouetted the fishing sampans in bold black against the silver of the water.

In long succession, sometimes alone and sometimes by twos or even sixes, big shapes churned past toward Kobe or Osaka or Yokohama—Japan’s onetime merchant marine, black-painted and with big white numerals of identity, ferrying back and forth without rest on the colossal job of keeping a half million men fed and armed and reinforced on the China coast. They stretched dirty black smoke across the stars.

We stayed several hours, next morning, anchored off Shimonoseki, but we didn’t go ashore. The straits there were Japan’s number one fortified area, and foreigners found it easier to stay aboard. The British policeman walked the deck, and he was pretty caustic about fortified areas and hot harbors. Down on the well deck a Japanese officer harangued a hundred recruits who were being sent to Shanghai and glory.

The morning after, at dawn, we were at Nagasaki, where the raking bows of three 10,000-ton cruisers poked out from docks which ended in a maze of little wood-and-paper houses and old trees. The fishing fleet drifted silently out past them through the mist. We went ashore and poked around among the streets of matchbox buildings, and wondered why the Chinese never loaded a few planes with incendiary bombs and sent them over Japan.

Japan dropped out of sight over the horizon as we headed due west. We picked up the yellow line where the Yangtze loses itself in the sea after forcing a way out into its heart. Then we raised the low dun China coast and ran upriver and anchored just off the mouth of the Whangpoo, downstream

from a dozen big freighters and on the beam of a seaplane tender which was gathering up its planes for the night.

Darkness fell and the crew blacked out the ship, and we were all pretty disgusted because it was too dark in the smoking room to play bridge and there was nothing to do but watch a Japanese captain doing stretching exercises and deep breathing at the next table.

Everything quieted down, and from the south came big flashes and dull, long-drawn explosions which told that the nightly barrage was on.

And that was the end of Japan, because when we landed next morning China was still China.

CHAPTER 3

CHINA is on page 12, a big stamp with several columns of ideographs. There is no arrival stamped in Shanghai, just one for Canton four months later, a great soup plate of a thing.

The little man outside the Yokohama consulate had been right. Nobody seemed interested in whether I landed or not. The Japanese recruits shuffled onto the quay and were marched off. Cases of weapons were started up out of the holds. The officer-passengers, most of them overhung from a bout with Osaka whisky the night before, vanished into Hongkew, the Japanese section of the International Settlement.

One of them had explained to me, coming upriver, that actually all the Japanese were doing around Shanghai was defending Hongkew against Chinese attack, just as British and American and Italian troops guarded their sector.

My police roommate put me into the business end of a Shanghai black maria and took me unchallenged through the sandbags and barbed wire on Garden Bridge, which separated the Japanese from the rest of Shanghai. That saved a half hour or so of questioning, and a strict customs examina-

tion. Then he dropped me at the door of the Cathay Hotel.

Every war or big crisis produces a hotel which stands out in mind because it's the center of news, or intrigue, or both. Usually it has the best bar in town. That was the Cathay. You could spot anyone you wanted to meet, sooner or later, in the bar or the lobby. Most of the correspondents lived there. During the day, up in the tower of the hotel, someone from the UP office spent his time watching the Japanese planes endlessly bombing the North Station, in Chinese Chapei, or looking for Chinese concentrations in Pootung across the river. At night, in the tower café, eight stories up, you dined and danced and rushed to the windows to watch the fireworks of the anti-aircraft when the Chinese planes came over.

Air raids were fun, then, because the Settlement was run by and for foreigners and therefore theoretically sacrosanct. Of course, there had been three mighty misaimed bombs (Chinese) which had killed a deplorable number of people (mostly Chinese). There were trench-mortar shells (Japanese) which seemed to overshoot astonishingly often and land on Settlement roofs, almost as if someone thought the Westerners ought to get a taste of cordite now and then. But all in all it was fun because when people aren't actually aiming at you, you don't really take guns and bomb fragments very seriously.

Yet, it was very easy to fall in love with China. I did it from the fourth-floor window of my room in the Cathay, and at that it was only the watered-down imitation of China which had survived in the foreign settlements.

Below me was the off-key bedlam of the Bund. A half dozen rust-streaked little China coasters unloaded at the edge. There were bales and crates and timber and rice by

the ton, and one whole load of great black pigs from the north which were chivvied up a gangway onto the quay into the crush of baggage coolies. Now and then one escaped and bolted across the street and the car line, squealing and dodging and caroming off a hundred legs, until ten or fifteen coolies cornered him and rounded him up.

The swarming coolies on the Bund live through an eternity of sweat and shouting each day. The sing-song blend of the shouts begins with dawn. You hear it rise and fall until dark, even in the inner corridors of the hotel. At night, there's the periodic baying of a ricksha coolie, pulling a sailor down in a rush for the last shore-party boat.

Upriver, where the Chinese city of Nantao begins, there was a line of half-submerged funnels and masts and superstructures stretching across stream. They were the ships of the Chinese boom, sunk at the start of hostilities to prevent the Japanese navy's putting a force on shore in the Chinese rear. Down from it, in long line at their anchorages, stretched the foreign warships, an Italian cruiser, a French one, two Dutch destroyers, a British 8,000 tonner, and the *Augusta*, flagship of the American Asiatic squadron. Coolie sampans fought the seagulls for the refuse thrown overboard from the ships.

Downstream lay the Japanese: first the *Idzumo*, a Russo-Japanese war relic with a charmed life, then a half-dozen river gunboats, then destroyers and light cruisers spotted on down beyond the farthest bend. Their guns were ready. Occasionally one of them lobbed a shell off somewhere back of town, into the Chinese lines.

On the far bank was Pootung, part burned, part untouched yet—factories, hovels, and little shops—still Chinese. Two Japanese planes, going about it so casually that

they might have been stunters at a county fair, wheeled over Pootung and periodically dropped in quick dives to plant light bombs where they suspected Chinese troops. Then a few bits of roof and great clouds of yellow dust would rise while the planes screamed upward again. I had never seen dive bombing before, and the performance looked good. But that was before the word *Stuka* had become part of the English language.

I saw my first real air raid at a party given by John Morris, Far Eastern Manager of the UP, that night in the tower room. The Chinese always came over at night, never very many of them and often without bombing. They seemed to enjoy annoying the Japanese.

One plane came in, quite low, with its navigation lights full on. Immediately, everything in the river except the neutrals opened up. A modern battleship carries an astonishing number of anti-aircraft and machine guns, and the Japanese made use of them all. They fired, apparently, on the theory that if the whole sky was filled with bursts and bullets, something must come down. The tracers crossed and recrossed like fireworks gone wild, and shells burst in all parts of the sky. It made a fine spectacle, but finally the Chinese plane tired of it and went home.

Shanghai in most ways really wasn't a war assignment. It was too good a grand-stand seat.

There was a Chinese machine-gun crew, over on Pootung point, which used to rip off a half belt or so every few nights at the *Idzumo*, then duck into a deep shelter while one, two, or three warships blasted at the shore point blank. Of course the machine-gun bullets did no harm to the *Idzumo*. But the Japanese seemed never to hit the gun crew, either, and the Chinese got a lot of quiet fun out of it.

But the serious war went on over in Chapei, and out beyond the western perimeter of the Settlement, where the Chinese regulars were entrenched. There the Japanese planes circled and bombed all day, and the shrapnel puffs marched across the sky over the scrubby lowlands, and the big gun shells fell day and night.

Before the withdrawal, we could stand at the edge of the outer Settlement, on neutral ground, swapping cigarettes with the Chinese troops. Occasionally a machine gun fired a short burst at the Japanese beyond Jessfield railway bridge, or a plane came over and unloaded. But the Chinese were pretty cheerful, up to the night when they had to pull out. They even found time, sometimes, to help the refugees who swarmed up the road to the safety of the Settlement, their faces stamped with dull misery.

One day we could see planes sweeping down relentlessly on the refugee road a mile or so away, machine gunning as they came. We couldn't see whether there were any troops on the road. The refugees at the gate surged against the barbed wire in fear.

You could lie in the sun up near the pinnacle of the Cathay tower, watching three or four Japanese planes endlessly circling in the sun—great wide circles of silver wings—deliberately bombing the gutted shell of the North Station, where Chinese still held out. The Japanese didn't have to fly high because there was nothing but a few machine guns to turn against them. They didn't drop very big bombs, and the bombs had very little effect on the massive building. Of course they shattered all the little men's homes and shops all around it, but the little men don't count much in the Far East and nobody cared.

You could stand on the French Bund, upstream, and watch

the Japanese gunboats a couple of hundred yards away send shells point blank into the warehouses at the ends of the boom, where the Chinese kept garrisons to prevent the Japanese dynamiting a channel through it.

From a godown on Soochow Creek in the safety of British sandbags, you could watch the Chinese “Lost Battalion” and, at very small risk, hop across the street to the shelter of the building and talk to the defenders. That was the night when many of the Japanese trench-mortar shells unaccountably missed the godown at pistol range, and fell a half mile behind it in the Settlement, and it was really just as dangerous in Nanking Road.

Or you could stand on the French bank of Siccawei Creek, as we did one morning, and watch two Japanese tanks lumber up the opposite bank fifty feet away, threading their way past the burning factories, to knock out a light wood house from which shots had been fired. The tanks were unlucky that morning because, when they got close, the side of the house fell away and revealed a concrete pillbox whose guns were much too hot for them.

You could stand on any one of a dozen roof tops, the night the Chinese evacuated Chapei, and watch a wall of flame which looked ten miles long eat up the homes and livelihood of a hundred thousand people. That fire lasted for days, in spots, blood red against the blankness of blacked-out Hongkew; and when it was over there were others on the opposite side of town, in the old Chinese city of Nantao where the Japanese relentlessly hunted snipers from house to house and burned them out if necessary.

Always you were safe, except from ricochets or stray shots, and you could usually find a telephone near by; and the Chinese censorship was very reasonable, except that it preferred

you to say “withdrawal” instead of “retreat.” Then for lunch you could drop in at the Shanghai Club, for Lancashire Hot Pot and a pint of ale, or at the Columbia Country Club for a set of tennis and a drink.

For three months, nearly, the Chinese stuck it out, without ever hearing heavy artillery of their own from behind them, and seldom seeing a Chinese plane. Then they gradually gave ground, back to Soochow Creek, then Siccawei, finally in disorder toward Nanking. How they had stood up to it so long, no one ever knew.

Pembroke Stephens of the London *Daily Telegraph* was killed on a water tower by a burst from a Japanese machine gun, the last day of Chinese resistance around Shanghai. He was on neutral territory at the time, but the Japanese advancing toward his tower said he had been mistaken for a Chinese lookout. It was quite possible, because the rear guard of the Chinese, with a machine gun, a light mortar, and some rifles, crouched just in front of the French barbed wire at the foot of the tower, and fired off the remnants of their ammunition before clambering over and surrendering to the little Annamese who guarded Frenchtown. The rest of us, in a brick house across the street, were quite safe.

For us—the foreigners—Shanghai was almost too comfortable and normal. For one thing under the tutelage of Hal Abend, of *The New York Times*, I began collecting Chinese art. He had the finest collection I knew of there, and with his help I managed to pick up a few really beautiful things without losing my shirt.

Hal made collecting a real pleasure. Three or four of us, like Melchers, or Bob and Mona Bellaire, would assemble for

drinks at Hal's apartment just before noon each Sunday. The goods came to us, usually in a few huge sheeted bundles lugged upstairs by a couple of cheerful reprobates from the Chinese quarter. You could drink and haggle, or just drink. Nobody cared, including the two reprobates.

On the basis of a spendthrift past in the hands of the dealers of Peking, Hal knew when to smile and refuse to consider anything like the quoted price. He said he never realized how badly he had been “stung” up north until he left for Shanghai and the dealers, in a fit of conscience, banded together and presented him with the most valuable single item he then possessed.

That experience probably saved me fifty per cent on everything I bought in Shanghai. Of course I haven't seen any of it since. Like everything else I own, it's in a warehouse somewhere in Brooklyn. Ethiopia is there too, and part of Germany and England, and some day it will make a fine hodgepodge to overstuff a house with.

But for the refugees it was quite different. They came through the barriers into the Settlement by the thousands, empty-faced, with a cooking pot, perhaps, and a few quilts. There were saints like Father Jacquinet who tried to care for them, but the whole galaxy of angels would hardly have been equal to the problem. War had left them nothing but the privilege of squatting in the slush of the raw China-coast winter.

It was my first sight of the refugee face. Now it is a commonplace to a hundred million people. I can't describe what's in it because it's a product of a national as well as a personal experience which no one person can grasp. Chinese or Pole or Finn or Belgian, it's the same, that refugee face. The face of blank despair.

For a long time, the Japanese and Chinese press conferences competed twice a day. The Chinese was a social affair, with cocktails in the afternoon, and a lot of smart, energetic officials to answer questions. Unfortunately for its success, the Japanese were on the aggressive, and they produced the news. When the lines around Shanghai fell, it quietly ceased to exist.

The Japanese conference was held in the Hotel Metropole, complete with three spokesmen and an interpreter, Bob Horigouchi, who spoke better English, French, and German than almost anyone present. If the job had been just interpreting, Bob would have been a happy man. Usually, it was a desperate scramble to keep peace between stiff-necked officers and a corps of correspondents, at least half of whom were always mad about something.

The Foreign Office spokesmen, who were mild and friendly, tried spasmodically to help Bob out, but usually retired in confusion. The Naval spokesman, Commander Isobe, steered clear of the arguments and got a lot of quiet fun out of them. The Army spokesmen, majors or colonels, with one exception, understood not a word of any foreign language; they came into the conference with a spiel carefully memorized, repeated it for what it was worth and generally refused to amplify or explain in any way. The fact that some of their claims, particularly the reports of air activity, were palpably fantastic made matters worse.

Punches never were pulled at the Japanese press conference. The worst was the day after the survivors of the *Panay* and the *Ladybird* reached Shanghai. The *Panay*, an American gunboat loaded with foreigners evacuated from Nanking, had been bombed and sunk in repeated attacks by Japanese

naval planes. The British *Ladybird* had been shelled by Japanese shore batteries above Nanking until she was so close to shore that the muzzles of the guns couldn't be depressed enough to hit her.

The conference rated an admiral and a general that day, instead of a commander and major. The Japanese had stopped trying to deny the incidents, but a one-hour barrage of questions produced nothing beyond vague admissions and a half-hearted attempt to intimate that the foreign gunboats had provoked attack. No explanation of any kind.

Two correspondents got so mad they walked out. The general shouted two or three long outbursts in Japanese which everyone always credited Horigouchi with watering down. Then, just as everyone was leaving disgusted, the general asked whether it was actually true that the *Panay* had so far violated international etiquette as to fire back at the planes which were diving at her.

“You're God damned right, General,” said Weldon James, who had been on the *Panay* for the UP. “And of course you won't be able to believe it, but we were trying to hit them too.”

Horigouchi didn't try to translate that. He hustled me out of the room with, “For God's sake, let's have a drink. Me, I'm just a peace lover.”

The Japanese press conference later was transferred across Garden Bridge to the Broadway Mansions in the Japanese area. Hans Melchers, of the German Transocean news agency, was strolling across the bridge with me one day, discussing pipe tobacco. Suddenly the Japanese sentry halfway across began jabbering at us and waving a very long gun with a foot and a half of bayonet on it.

It developed that by passing the sentry with our pipes in our mouths, we were “insulting the Japanese army, and with it, the Emperor.”

The colonel at the press conference said he thought the sentry was quite within his rights.

Well, you can't shoot back with a pipe.

Everyone knew that the Japanese would try to take over the International Settlement some day. General Matsui told us so, six correspondents who were invited out to his headquarters.

The General was the Japanese Commander in Chief in Shanghai, a little man with a small, weatherbeaten face and the sharpest, blackest, coldest eyes I ever met full on. H. R. Knickerbocker, who sat next to me while the General talked, said as we left that he'd “a lot rather pal around with Heinrich Himmler.”

The General didn't like foreign correspondents very much, it was pretty plain. But he was about to drive the Chinese away from Shanghai—in fact, he forecast the day, ten days later—and he thought it was time the Westerners were informed that Shanghai was through as a foothold in Asia.

He didn't say so in so many words, simply warned that if the Settlement authorities couldn't keep order, the Japanese army might have to move in and do so.

The first move thereafter was the “victory parade,” which the Japanese insisted on routing through the Settlement. Nobody in Shanghai had the slightest desire to see any more of the Japanese army. They had had quite sufficient of it already. But the Japanese wanted to celebrate “the saving of the city.”

The inevitable happened. When the procession of thick-

legged, stubble-bearded little troops was in the middle of Nanking Road, somebody threw a grenade. Maybe it was a Chinese or maybe a Korean hired by the Japanese. He was shot dead on the spot and nobody ever knew. But the Japanese immediately started to take over, barbed wire barricades, machine-gun posts, and all.

Some of the most explosive language ever heard in the Marine Corps blasted back the first contingent which tried to enter the American defense area. The Ulstermen to the right reacted violently and abusively. So the Japanese gave up the attempt, that time.

And then Johnny Morris shipped me off to Hong Kong in February, 1938, and it was the beginning of the end of me in China. I was full of plans for a trip to Indo-China, up the munitions route to Yunnan-fu, down over the track which was becoming the Burma Road, then up to Chungking and Hankow, where the Chinese government was holding out. But Adolf Hitler had been quiet for a very long time at that point, and he spoiled the plans.

The coastal boat for Hong Kong was so small that I don't even remember her name. She may have been 2,000 tons. Fore and aft, on the well decks, she carried pigs and coolies, respectively. Both lived in the open, under canvas awnings. We were amidships, a German pig-bristle salesman, a British consul, a Scotsman who was a North China mining engineer until the Japanese overran his mine, a Mexican photographer, and myself.

The livestock made the trip a little high, on the whole, because there wasn't much wind to blow the smell away. But in view of what that boat would have done in a storm, we were just as happy.

There wasn't much to do except watch the fishing junks and experiment with a couple of bottles of *zoubrovka* which someone had given the photographer. We did pick up Daventry on the captain's radio, one evening, and listened to Anthony Eden's speech of resignation as Foreign Secretary, and the British consul poured himself a stiff whisky and talked for a half hour about how England and France were more than a match for the Axis, anyway, and how foolish it was for people to squabble over European affairs when obviously China was the big crisis.

That was just over three weeks before the *Anschluss*.

Off Swatow a grimy little Japanese destroyer, obviously a good many days out on open sea patrol, swept up, gave us a look, made a signal, and skittered off down the long swells. There were three other warships visible, and a hospital ship at anchor close in under the shore, and what might have been a couple of transports hull down, off toward Formosa. It looked as if the Japanese were about to take an interest in the South China coast.

No one would ever have dreamt it in Swatow, which drowsed away in a warm sun and scrabbled for a little rice to eat, and pounded its pewter and stitched its linen, while the sandbag emplacements somebody had put up early in the war slowly broke apart and poured themselves out onto the dirt roads.

There was an air-raid watch tower of bamboo perched on the roof on one building. But Swatow had had one air raid several weeks before and the sentry in the tower had been asleep, so they shot him and now nobody was up there. It didn't make much difference, because everyone knew that if the Japanese wanted to take the port they could do so.

Swatow was invasion conscious, even so. It was Washing-

ton's Birthday, and the gunboat *Tulsa*, downstream, which wanted to observe the occasion with the usual salute, had informed the mayor so that no one would be startled by gunfire. Unfortunately, the mayor forgot to tell anyone else.

The saluting gun on a gunboat sounds at a distance more or less like a large shoe dropped on the deck. That was quite sufficient for the waterfront coolies. The quay and the pontoons began clearing before the second gun; sampans had wallowed around and started for shore before the third; by the sixth, the coaster captain emerged from his cabin, surveyed the deserted dock, remarked “B-1-loody fools,” and disappeared again. When the twenty-one had been finished, life began to stir; and, because—whatever it was—the excitement apparently didn't mean immediate attack, everyone picked up and continued at his rice or his tin or stitching or load toting.

The mountain of Victoria Island surged green, and mist streaked up out of the milky harbor as we nosed into Hong Kong with the dawn. Only the junks were moving, the great, slab-sided Pearl River junks, and a few sampans idling around for scraps among the silent foreign ships.

Rio may be grander, but Hong Kong is the most magnificent harbor I have ever seen. It could hold the ships of Asia at one time. But the mountain dwarfs it.

The city was quite conscious of the dignity and solidity which befitted the outer anchor of the Empire lifeline. It strides massively and conservatively uphill to the point where the mountain sweeps fast toward the sky. Above that cling the villas and the tennis courts and the formal gardens which might just as well be in South Devon or the Chilterns, except that the shrubs and flowers are bigger and thicker and

brighter. Then the mountain takes over for itself, and arches its backbone high above.

Its colors by day are soft greens and grays and browns, except for the occasional scar of a road or gun emplacement. At night the mountain goes into sharp black outline, and a million lights seem to burst in a wave at its feet and to fling their spray out over its face to the top.

The Japanese had not yet encircled Hong Kong, and the guns and planes and trucks and munitions from abroad continued to pour in over the docks, and up the railroad or the new highway to Canton. German anti-aircraft guns and other equipment were being shipped upriver to help China resist, and at the same time Dr. Trautmann, the German ambassador in Hankow, was urging China to come to terms.

German and American transport planes swept out over the low red hills behind Kowloon to keep up the connection with the north, with Hankow and with Chungking, up over the Yangtze gorges. Even the trains from the north got through pretty regularly because a few million coolies lived out their lives along the line of the track, and could be put to work whenever the Japanese managed to bomb it.

I went upriver on a British steamer, to follow the munitions flow through its first stage to Canton. We might have been on a Thames excursion to Ramsgate, or a fifteen shilling holiday week-end round trip to Calais—"See the Picturesque Continent, Meet the French at Home." The ship was the same; so were the mutton and mint jelly and the awful coffee and the pudding for dessert. But outside, the junks dropped astern and the old pagodas guarded the paddy fields, and the little gray Portuguese forts added another day to five centuries of slow weathering; and there was the roll of a bombing raid up where the railroad passed through the hills, and two

Japanese destroyers were anchored just out of range of the big Chinese guns at Boca Tigris, where the river narrows toward Canton.

Shameen was even more British than Hong Kong because it's only a very small island given over to walks, shade trees, lawns, homes and—naturally—the club. There the Canton foreigners lived, the river turbulent with traffic behind them and only a fifty-foot canal packed with the sampans of river coolies to separate them from the bedlam of the city.

Canton, even after the Japanese had started bombing it and driving its population out into the flat lands round about, throbbed with life as only China can. It was almost a shock to move from the foreign bars of Shanghai, and the tea in the lobby of the Hong Kong Hotel, into the jade merchants' street, or the meat market, or the fabulous road where the fireworks stores stood one after another in long line, festooned with huge strings of fat red crackers and stacked with big packages of noise.

Of course, they were just good-natured, peacetime fire-crackers, which the Chinese use to let off steam. They couldn't have made much noise to compete with the bombs the Japanese dropped a few weeks later, the day they burned down that street.

During the day in Canton you could play tennis, or take a shallow-draft motor sampan up through the dead streams into the countryside, or drive out to the hills, except where the Chinese had their defense areas. Or you could sit on the roof of the German club, near the airport, and watch the Englishman who assembled the Gloster Gladiators for China, take them up and put them through tight acrobatics to test them out. And young Chinese, who had taken to wings because they had to fight a modern war, used to run the planes

out and try stunts, or dive at targets on the field with their guns snapping.

Once three Japanese planes passed over, high, heading east. A couple of Gladiators pulled themselves steeply up off the ground in pursuit; but I don't think they caught the Japanese, who had too good a start, and had dropped their load of bombs, and were making back fast for their carrier off the coast. The Japanese, we were told, didn't fool around very much with the Gladiators. They're not in the class of the Me 110 or the Spitfire, but they're a very tough plane in a dogfight. The Russian pursuit pilots didn't like them very much when they appeared in Finland, and the word is that the Italians didn't like them in Libya.

The gunboat *Mindanao*, anchored off the tip of Shameen, represented the United States Navy on the Canton station. She was something else, besides. She was the island's social center on evenings when there was no function on at the club. The *Mindanao* put on a nightly moving-picture show.

The films weren't very recent, but they were new to Canton. And they made you forget the war for a while. And if you were lucky, Commander Clay or one of his officers might invite you into the little wardroom after the show for a cup of Navy coffee, which is the best in the world.

On the river outside, a couple of coolies might squabble sleepily, and a few bars from a flute might drift in, and the little lanterns of the flower boats bobbed along while the girls looked for business.

By the time I got back to Hong Kong, Schuschnigg had been and gone in Berchtesgaden, and, because distance blurs the focus so much, none of us realized what was coming. One night I sat over a whisky in the lobby with Ronald Monson of the London *Daily Telegraph* and Vernon Bartlett

of the *News Chronicle*, who knows European politics inside out. We agreed that the coming summer probably would be hot in Central Europe.

But Bartlett was catching a Blue Funnel boat for Singapore and Europe next day, stopping off en route. I was more interested in that trip over the munitions routes to Yunnan and the north, and Monson idly wanted action anywhere.

Bartlett's boat had hardly cleared the harbor when a UP flash out of San Francisco brought news of the march into Austria. Monson was out within twenty-four hours, recalled to Europe. Then someone in New York remembered that I spoke German, and two days later I was booked on a Dutch coolie boat, bound for Singapore and the K.L.M. plane for Naples.

The mountain shouldered its way in between us and the lights of Hong Kong as the *Cremer* bore south into the China Sea, and that was all there was to China.

CHAPTER 4

THE BRITISH visa on page 10 is supercharged for Singapore March 22, 1938, with a business-like "Permitted to Land, Transit Only." Whatever the policy of the Foreign Office might be, the Admiralty was long since preparing for a trial of strength, and foreigners were not particularly welcome near the huge base.

The *Cremer* slid into anchor just before dark, after the most peaceful trip I had ever made. The sea had been like glass, the sun not too hot. I had the whole first class to myself and ate with the officers; they taught me to like smoked eel and Dutch gin, out on the deck before lunch and dinner. We potted at the flying fish which skidded out from the bow wave, using the .38 revolvers kept aboard in case some of the well-deck coolies turned out to be pirates. Once we sighted whales, off the purple mountains of Indo-China. The officers would punctuate the rubbers of bridge, or the mammoth curry the Dutch call *reistafel*, with talk of the need for Indies defense against expanding Japan.

That night in Singapore harbor planes came over, out of all corners of the sky, and the big clumps of anti-aircraft searchlights practiced fingering them out, picking them up

and holding them for the gunners. A high plane is a tiny fleck of white when the beam catches it, and almost never can it sideslip out of the light once it's caught. We watched for a couple of hours, drinking the captain's gin slings, and thought what a pretty sight it was. The next anti-aircraft searchlights I saw in action were in Cherbourg harbor, groping for fleets of bigger, faster planes which were loaded with magnetic mines, and it was not a pretty experience at all, because we were at anchor in the middle of the whole thing.

They let us go ashore in Singapore late the next morning. I worked Bob Waite, the UP man, for a ride through the jungle, a batch of long, cool drinks, and some idea of what Singapore meant to England's and our future in Asia—and of what it could be made to mean if only there were the battle-ships to spare for it.

It seemed a crime to go to bed at all, Sumatra and Java and the Celebes stretching out from just across the Strait, to be sensed perhaps, even if I was to leave the East without the chance to see and touch and smell them.

Next morning at five o'clock we took off in the between light for Europe, and the wings of the plane caught the sunlight at five hundred feet over the jungle floor.

Several other pages in the passport represent the rest of the trip back. There are matter-of-fact stamps from the police of British-run Karachi and British-toned Alexandria, and angular Greek, and notations in Arabic from places which I can't even identify from the writing. The round Persian stamp from Djask is flanked by a pale green and brown, and a pale salmon and brown stamp. It is altogether the most impressive of all, and it commemorates the most God-forsaken and insignificant spot I ever touched.

The K.L.M. planes are American, and they ran like clock-work halfway around the world, over a route which is two-thirds desert or jungle or water, with no emergency fields. When I made the trip, it was five and a half days from Amsterdam to Batavia. Without war, it would have been two and a half, with berths made up in flight. As it was, we spent our nights on the ground, and I got a chance to see something, at least, of the part of the world I had dreamed about since first I could read.

Penang had always been a name which meant thick bamboo, and spices and bright birds and rickshas and slow buffaloes and straight women with water jars on their heads. We had three quarters of an hour there, in a little airport hemmed in by thick forest, and the time was consecrated to ham and eggs and strong British tea.

Then we took off again, over jungle so dense that you never saw the ground, across the long neck of Thailand to the low cultivated rice fields by the sea. Along the coast the fish traps made little keyhole patterns in the shallow water, and a few sails moved out across the gulf. Improbable cloud banks kept always one horizon away.

I had found Bangkok when I was six or eight years old, while I was looking at the pictures in a children's encyclopedia. Probably it was the white elephants that caught my fancy. At any rate, it had always been the place which was unspoiled, where everything was color, and the temple dancers moved like puppet goddesses, and the rulers hunted in the deep jungle for great beasts. It was the sort of place to steep yourself in. Maybe it is. We swept low over the city, over the domes and the white buildings and the trees, and landed several miles outside town, where we had another three quarters of an hour for fish and lamb chops and beer.

I began fuming at this business of skimming the map like a tourist allowed an hour for the Louvre. The second through passenger was a Dutchman fed up with sun and tropics, and yearning for the fogs and the cold rain of Amsterdam. He was no help. The third was Henri Cochet, the French tennis ace, who could get a chuckle out of anything and who kidded me gently most of the way to Naples about the things we almost saw.

We came up over the jungle to the Gulf of Martaban, and as we passed out over the coast, Captain Hondoung, skipper of the plane, pointed down at a ruined pagoda and said “Moulmein—do you know the song?” That compensated a little for Bangkok.

Far off a flame glimmered in the haze, and grew and took shape and became the fabulous Shwe Dagon pagoda of Rangoon, burnished gold from the cluster of little temples at the base to the great parasoled pinnacle which lances at the sky.

We landed early enough for sightseeing. Cochet announced that he had already seen the pagoda, and that a second view was not worth exposing himself again to leprosy. But I wasn't so sure, once we reached the building.

You leave your shoes and socks at the base, for this is one of the holiest of all holies of Buddhism. Then you climb, up a long flight of old, uneven steps which groan under the massive wood of the canopy, to the mound where the pagoda springs upward. Even the dust under your feet feels old, and at the same time faintly alive.

The small temples, a hundred of them, I suppose, jostle one another up to the base of the big pagoda. They are ornate, overblown, with their ponderous bells and their grotesque images; the temple chickens forage endlessly in the dust

among the shuffling feet of the worshipers. And out of the dirt and filth underfoot and the sweat and chatter, and the fussiness of the little temples, the great bulk of the pagoda heaves itself free and shoots up, clean and simple as Buddha himself, to the pinnacle almost four hundred feet above.

Where you leave, a Burmese woman with bright-dyed skirt and shining hair sells a bucket of purple permanganate solution for a copper coin, and you carefully disinfect your feet and hope the solution is strong.

The plane took off again in cool darkness, and we met the sun somewhere on our rise. Once over the jungle, we passed a big herd of elephants in a clearing. They probably weren't wild, much as I'd like to think so. We cut out over the sea, then back to half-land again, a maze of channels and soggy growth which marked the delta of the Ganges.

The airport at Calcutta was so hot it was a relief to have only a half hour. When we rose again, the captain went to over fifteen thousand feet. Even there it was bumpy from the waves of heat which came off the arid, eroded, blank north Indian plain. But we were above the brown line of the heat haze, and just short of Allahabad we could see, far to the north, the sharp white wall of the Himalayas.

Jodhpur was an eye-opener. The maharajah was a flying enthusiast, and his airport compared favorably with any but the best in Europe. The hotel near by among the trees was modern and clean. We had time to drive through the town. Perhaps as a compensation for the forty-five-minute stops on empty airfields, there was a religious festival in progress. In one large dose, the Dutchman and I got sacred cows, and bright processions, and several snake charmers and troops of trained dogs, and a fakir who unfortunately was not at the

moment lying on his bed of nails. There was no rope trick, and the Dutchman said there never is.

We swept down over the Indus to Karachi, next day, and picked up a load of British officers, off on leave from India and looking for a chance to celebrate. At Djask, Persia, the airport of barren white ended in a hot sea. A forlorn-looking official collected the passports and went off to his hut and stamped them, and we took off again over the bleak, black mountains of the southeast tip of Arabia. Halfway up the Persian Gulf we passed the eastbound plane, the only moving thing in hundreds of miles of desolation.

Over the blank marshes where the Tigris and Euphrates flow into the sea, great clouds of flamingos swept up like a mist of pink as the plane passed. The emptiness gave way to the feathery green plaid of date palm plantations, and we dropped at Basra. The king was opening the magnificent new airport. England was represented by a squadron from Suez or Aden, but the biggest and most impressive planes in sight were the Junkers transports of the Lufthansa, which shuttled back and forth over the Berlin-to-Baghdad route the Kaiser had dreamed about.

The plane wallowed through a thunder storm all the way to Baghdad, and we were forced low and passed close to the huge ruined arch of Ctesiphon, alone on the barren ground, which marks the throne of Chosroes.

Baghdad should have been the fabled Hanging Gardens and the pageantry of Eastern courts. My sole impressions were rain, and a river running strong and full to its banks, and dirt, and corrugated iron. We left it again before daylight.

The plane picked up the British pipe line and made for

the Mediterranean. We flew low over the precarious hill villages on the rocky watershed, across Jordan where it is lost in the Dead Sea, past Jerusalem and Bethlehem and down to Lydia on the fertile shore of the Mediterranean. Then we cut straight over the sea to the Nile delta, landed briefly at Alexandria, and turned north over the clean sea and the steep Aegean islands to Athens.

The routine of the trip had become easy, except for the ungodly hours we had to get up. We took off around five A. M. each day, let down the backs of the seats, slept as long as possible, then alternately dozed or read or told stories between stops. At each halt we ate and tried to find something cool to drink, and smoked as many cigarettes as possible, to last us until the next airport. At night, we went to bed early because we had to get up so soon.

The man with the handlebar mustaches and the ham melodrama gestures changed all that. He told us one tourist party had nicknamed him “Alfalfa Bill Pappadoupolos,” and he liked the name. He guided us over the Acropolis, and insisted we should see Athens night life. So the Dutchman and one of the British officers and I went out, because we should be at the end of the trip next day.

The hotel porter recommended a night club, which we reached at ten P. M. There were no other customers there because nothing starts in Athens until nearly midnight. It was most unfortunate. The hostesses concentrated on us, and they wanted sweet champagne. We tried some whisky which certainly never had seen Scotland, and drank a little champagne too. We really hardly got to bed at all, which was all right until we got into the air at the usual five A. M. I do not recommend a rough flight with a hang-over. As the plane

bucketed up the spiny Apennines, the phrase “See Naples and Die” grew to a high probability.

The officer and the Dutchman, as we said good-by, looked at the plane and thought of the nine hundred miles or so to go, and shuddered.

My orders were changed in Rome. Vienna was no longer a big story because Nazi occupations are very quick, indeed, and the struggles of the occupied, if any, do not last long. I was ordered to Berlin, which I had left a little over a year before with a sigh of relief and a hope that it would be forever.

As the train left the Dolomites behind and plugged up the Brenner toward Innsbruck, the German across the table from me in the diner told me how everything was going to be peaceful in Europe because now the Reich was united and “of course those Czechs will have to give in.”

CHAPTER 5

GERMANY is on a dozen pages of the passport. Page 30 is stamped at Kufstein, March 29, 1938, when I entered; there are visas on 14, 21, and 28, the last of them unused because the Second World War intervened; there are two residence permits; page 18 is covered with notations of cheap travel marks issued by the bank. Every correspondent used them as long as he could on arrival in Germany because they were four to the dollar instead of the regulation two and a half. Eventually the Reichsbank found you out, and you resigned yourself to strict legality.

It is difficult to describe my sentiments when I returned to Germany, because it's the foreign country I knew best, and the one I had sympathized with most.

I had always liked the German people, who are easier to become friends with and more satisfactory to live with than any other people on the Continent. I liked their cities: Hamburg, which has a real big-city feel to it; Cologne, which rides the Rhine with a grace all its own; Dresden, which is light and spacious; Nuremberg and Freiburg, which are old and always will be old, regardless of the electric lights and the street cars and the new buildings in their old streets;

Munich, which is noisy and always hungry for heavy food and thirsty for that wonderful beer, and which is also a treasure hoard of art and music. Only Berlin, a bumptious, overgrown Prussian village, has always been ugly, and the Nazis have consistently made it uglier.

I had loved the music, not just the opera or the classics, but the songs you hear in the afternoon on a wine terrace above the Rhine, or the chorus in a Munich beer hall while the brass in the band bats the words back down your throat. I had walked on the Rhine, in the Black Forest, and some in the Bavarian Alps, where you're part of the mountains and don't have to stand off and look at them as you do in Swiss resorts.

I had liked the German trains because everyone always was chatty and friendly, and you traded beer bought at one station platform for *Baumkuchen* bought at the next. I liked *Eisbein*, which is pig's knuckles, with sauerkraut. I thought the delicate white wines from the Mosel, up back of Koblenz, were the best on earth. As I may have indicated, I loved the beer.

I had spent over three years in Germany, some of it on short trips during the Republic but most of it after the Nazi regime began.

If you know Germany, and particularly if you have lived in it and known its people, you can understand what caused National Socialism. The fault is by no means all German. But it's virtually impossible for any American who has the slightest conception of what is going on to feel anything but hatred for the present regime.

The Nazis always used to make a great point of the fact that the government was Germany's business and nobody's else, and that no foreigner had a right to criticize it. They

were right up to a point. It's none of your concern as a foreigner what sort of government the Germans choose to exist under, what happens to the standard of living, or what becomes of the half dozen classes of scapegoats whom the Nazis conveniently blame for everything. But you do earn the right to hate it when you begin to realize, as virtually every correspondent in Germany did by 1935, what it is about to do to the rest of the world.

Nazi officials, who really didn't care very much one way or another, sometimes were a bit puzzled why foreigners didn't like them better. There was one man, a little, dull, subordinate party official who since has been active in propagandizing National Socialism abroad, who got himself periodically duller-drunk on beer, and who used to lean across the table and say, “Beattie, you are no friend of Germany's.”

Well, arguing it out was pointless. But I always remembered the description Wally Deuel, of the *Chicago Daily News*, gave of Hitler. Hitler, Wally said, was like a man who walks into a dressy party, kicks his hostess in the shins, slaps his host's face, proceeds around the room committing minor mayhem on all the guests, and then when everyone has gotten mad enough and thrown him out, stands forlorn in the street, arms outstretched, and bays:

“You see. Nobody loves me.”

Settling down again in Germany was not difficult because everything was just as it had been before, only more so. It was just that the military machine had grown so much the bigger for one year more of work, and that there were so many more kilometers of impressive—and strategic—highways. Food was a little scarcer, and its quality a little worse.

Cannon had effectively replaced butter, and were making inroads on everything else. There were fewer people with whom you could attempt to talk sanely about anything.

The most impressive single thing was the growth of the army. Berlin never had been short of uniforms. Now it was full of them, soldiers marching, soldiers strolling, soldiers perched on tanks or gun carriages, or on trucks by the thousands, all of which seemed to be routed through the most prominent streets of Berlin to advertise the nation's strength.

It had little or no outward effect on the German people, who regardless of their loyalties had grown very apathetic since 1933, and seemed finally to have exhausted all their capacity for show of emotion and to have produced only an *ersatz* article to order. It certainly evoked no enthusiasm from the foreigners, who had been thoroughly sick for years of the beating of the drums.

But nobody could fail to be aware of how the army was growing. To make it certain, new weapons, bigger tanks, or the colossal nine-inch field gun unveiled in the parade for Admiral Horthy (and for the benefit of the Czech military attaché), were being casually brought out into the open from time to time.

Everyone knew where the anti-aircraft positions were on the roofs in central Berlin; there was another spot on the one good golf course where a battery of the heavy anti-aircraft would be set up if necessary. Troop convoys were endlessly on the move on all the roads. The workers were contributing their marks, over and above their party dues and the petty blackmail of the Stormtroop street solicitors, for the People's Car; and everyone suspected that the huge plant at Fallersleben, which was to surpass Ford's in production, would be turned over to tanks before the people ever got their cars.

The air force was not so much in evidence as it had been at the start. That was easy to explain. At first, it was necessary to propagandize because the air force wasn't worth very much, and the planes were slow and not numerous. Now the air force was the strongest in the world, and a little mystery seemed preferable. So there weren't often many planes over the cities, except on big occasions, and then they came in hundreds, and they weren't slow, but were Me 109's, and Heinkel 111's, and occasionally a few raw-boned, ugly two-seaters which later turned out to be the *Stukas*.

The city's unskilled laborers, and other workers who had been once in the building trade, and thousands of technicians, disappeared without fanfare. Occasionally one would tell you before he left that he was going “to the big fortifications in the west.”

The illustrated papers varied the diet of stories on the glories of the last war with long, diagramed dispatches on the tactics of the *Panzerdivision* or the parachute troops or the attack bombers of the *Luftwaffe* in the next war. They edified the German public because the Germans always have been suckers for a drum. It seemed a pity, considerably later, that some of the foreign general staffs had not studied the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* more closely, since they seemed to have no other foreknowledge of the technique of the German attack.

The papers carried long, exuberant articles on the beauties of Austria and the indescribable joy of the Austrians at becoming part of Germany. But more and more they went over to the sufferings of the Sudeten Germans, and to threats of reprisal.

Overlaid, more or less haphazardly by 1938, on the beat

of the war machine, was the familiar Goebbels paeon of how wonderful is peace, and how peaceful is Germany, and how lucky is anyone who can share in her blessings. A broad avenue was hewed through the lovely Tiergarten so that Berliners could drive better in the new cars they were going to get. *Kraft durch Freude* conducted thousands of vacation trips to Madeira and the Aegean and Norway, and into the Bavarian Alps and the Erz Gebirge and the Harz mountains. There were imposing new buildings anywhere and everywhere, including the Reich Chancellery, which would have held a whole Republican government and which was, oh, much gaudier than, if not so ugly as, Hermann Goering's new Air Ministry. Construction workers were given big signs to erect on their sites, proclaiming, “For the fact that we work here, we thank the Fuehrer.”

The Czech travel bureau, which had a neat office on Unter den Linden, advertised all-inclusive vacation trips, at advantageous rates; it seemed a bit rash to call too much attention to the beauties of Czechoslovakia.

The Stormtroops, marching through the streets at night, sometimes sang a song which ran:

*“Wir werden weiter marschieren,
Wenn alles in Scherben fällt,
Da heute gehört uns Deutschland,
Und morgen die ganze Welt.”*

Translated, that means:

“We will march onward,
Even if everything falls to bits,
For today Germany belongs to us,
And the world will, tomorrow.”

A Nazi at Nuremberg assured me the correct version substituted “*hört*” for “*gehört*,” which would make it “hears” instead of “belongs.” I don’t know how it was written; only how it was sung.

The coming war kept breaking through the peaceful overlay. One day the papers would be hailing the Austrian plebiscite as a vindication of Hitler’s policy, and everyone would tell you that now Germany had her “equality” and there could be no cause for future tension. The next day the Hitler birthday parade would come along, with an armored regiment of one hundred and twenty tanks—that’s one quarter of a *Panzerdivision*—exhibited in full for the first time, and the papers side by side with their ecstasies over the tanks would describe how the Czechs “irresponsibly” were mistreating the Sudeten Germans.

One day everyone read about Dr. Ley’s great “Joy and Work Congress” at Hamburg, supposedly a living proof to the little nations of Europe of German benevolence toward the workers at home and neighbors everywhere. Next day there was nothing to read but screams of rage, pitched at a high frenzy in the *Angriff*, more moderate but equally unconvincing in the conservative papers, at some fantastic “instance of Czech brutality” which had probably been concocted in Berlin.

More and more, as the summer progressed, the crisis broke through and dominated the peaceful overlay. The people, except for the party clique which knew just when to cheer and which lived in a perpetual state of hoarse, pop-eyed hysteria over Jews and Czechs and democrats and those horrid Communists, were dispirited and confused. Nobody in Germany fails to realize that Nazi propaganda is completely cynical, that truth is only incidental and that lies, by the ad-

mission of Nazi propagandists themselves, are usually preferable. But everyone in Germany is gradually affected by it, by the months and months of constant pounding and the shrewd use of catchwords and bogeymen. Like German bombing, German propaganda counts on getting its effect not from aim, but from sheer weight of high explosive.

So the German people were confused. They didn't want war. They probably longed for peace more profoundly than any other nation in Europe, because the First World War had lasted ten years longer for them than for the rest. The propagandized vision of a Germany paramount on the Continent and a power throughout the world was as stirring as the beat of the *Badenweiler* March; but the German people—the older ones, at least, and many of the younger—feared the point where “re-winning of Germany's rightful place” would become the all-out, ruthless grab it now is, and total war would come again.

They only half realized how weak the democracies were; they feared the old combination against them, with the resources of the United States again thrown into the balance; they more than half realized, in 1938, that their own strength was not yet at its peak; and they saw the signs of war unmistakably because they knew their regime must have constant successes to survive.

There were very few people in Germany who did not know that, love of peace or no, the Germany of Adolf Hitler would keep the peace just so long as everyone else concerned did exactly what Adolf Hitler wanted him to do.

For one day, that summer, time rolled back for an event which, twenty-five years before, might have prevented the First World War. Then the build-up for the Second World War went on again.

The event was the marriage of Romanoff to Hohenzollern—Grand Duchess Kira of Russia to Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, grandson of the former Kaiser.

Twenty-five years before, it would have united two empires which together spanned the world from the farthest reaches of Asia to the North Sea. In 1938 it was nothing more on the surface than a match between two discredited royal families, one exiled and the other tolerated in Germany only because the new regime felt so strong it need not bother its head with monarchism.

It was a day for dreams of what might have been. But no one present at the ceremony could have failed to remember that Kira's father, the Grand Duke Cyril, was Pretender to the throne of Russia, or that Louis Ferdinand, the Kaiser's favorite grandson, was the man most likely to be emperor, if ever there were to be a king in Germany again.

The wedding party was small. The regime would not have looked kindly on anything ostentatious. But it was like a breath out of old, gracious days when no one dreamed of world eruption—the former German Crown Prince, the Grand Duke Cyril, the solid, hawk-nosed Ferdinand, former Czar of Bulgaria, a few score close relatives whose names were the cream of the Almanach de Gotha.

They assembled in a simple dignified room in Cecilienhof, the Crown Prince's chateau in Potsdam, a mile or so away from the great Frederician palaces which were the glory of Hohenzollern. Potsdam, which is strongly traditionalist, will never escape the atmosphere of rococo gilt, and broad, dusty parade grounds, and guards regiments, and royal coaches. Its people, Third Reich or no, seem to live at least half in the past. At the gates of Cecilienhof park stood a few old men and women who knew of the marriage and wanted to par-

ticipate a bit in it, even though the Nazi press had had little time or inclination to advertise it beforehand.

An old Russian priest began intoning the superb Orthodox wedding service. Royalty stood ranked along both sides of the room. The Crown Prince, uniformed gorgeously as a Death's Head Hussar, relaxed his attention for a moment from the bridal couple to tickle the back of the princess in front of him with the plume of his shako.

Then the ceremony was over. The party left for Doorn, where the old Kaiser gave his blessing to the German Evangelical service a few days later. And Potsdam was submerged again in the build-up for the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and for the Second World War.

The mood developed throughout the summer as the Czech crisis was nursed to its screaming climax. Because they never got a chance to hear anything else, big sections of the population began to believe that the Czechs really were a nation of rapists, baby beaters, gunmen, and assorted habitual criminals. Underneath, there was the same glum worry about what would happen, and gradually a fatalistic, muddled hopelessness which all the screams from the loudspeakers could not dent.

I remember the night in September when everyone thought the Chamberlain-Hitler negotiations had broken down, when the ships on the high seas were being ordered to turn back or to head for neutral ports. The British Navy and the French Army were mobilizing. Antiaircraft guns were in position on the roofs of Berlin. Apparently in an effort to spark the crowd into life, a strong column of troops, infantry and artillery, and scouts and supporting tanks, was marched out of its barracks, around by a dozen prominent streets through the city, then back to its barracks again.

I watched it pass through Unter den Linden, where there were more strollers than usual. The people stood in silent knots on the street corners and watched the troops go by. Then they went home.

The shotless victory of Munich struck the spark, of course; Hitler had done it again, and the Reich was a little bigger and had a huge prestige with the little nations and the big ones. No patriotic German could fail to thrill to that, regardless of his politics. Many people even believed for a while in “peace in our time”—the German type of peace.

Then came the rape of Bohemia and Moravia, which put Bismarck in the shade for sheer cynicism. That day revived all the old fear, for after that the oratory could not stop with “reuniting all Germans.” It became clear that Hitler would stop at nothing.

I can’t follow the development of the mood beyond that because I left Germany within a month. Then the party was exuberant. The Corridor would be German by August 31 “without a shot.” Russia was about to swing the pendulum for war, but nobody knew it, and only a very few caught the first faint hints of the deal. The majority were a little glummer and more confused than before.

I have been told by people who went through it that there was no spark of high adventure in Berlin, the night Poland was invaded. I have been told that the fall of Paris, last of the stupendous successes, made hardly a ripple. I can’t imagine a German who has lived through the Second World War thus far without a feeling of power and pride in his nation and a growing conviction that Germany finally is going to win and who doesn’t feel that now, in any event, he must stand or fall with the regime. But down deep, I believe, there is still the mood of glumness and confusion, and a wry

hope for the best and a fear of the worst. I imagine it will last until the issue is settled.

The mood of the German people was a background for a year crowded with impacts. The year ran the scale, not once but once a week or a day, from terror and high intrigue to bombast and low comedy.

I remember how it suddenly became obvious that the Anti-Comintern Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan was not directed primarily against Russia at all, but the British Empire. Probably it should have been obvious from the start.

All three partners were “have-nots.” Germany certainly was entitled to status as a first-rank power. Neither of the others was of the same stature; in fact, both had assumed positions beyond their own strength, by force of geography or politics. But all needed something more than they had, to pursue their ways of life.

Ethiopia could not conceivably give Italy what she wanted. Austria and Czechoslovakia and all other prizes within easy reach would leave Germany still short. Even the great unexploited bulk of China, if Japan ever succeeded in winning it, was not all the latter needed. Conquest of Russia, by all three combined, was a task so colossal it probably never could be attempted by purely military means. At most they might try for a military decision leading to peace on their own terms.

The obvious target was Great Britain, which had almost everything, whose governments had grown consistently more complacent and myopic, and which, even if she awoke, had a long thin line of empire which lay open to attack. The pact was bound eventually to develop into an onslaught on Brit-

ain, and the cynical Ribbentrop must have known it from the first. Hitler may not have, because Hitler had always wanted an alliance with Britain—on his own terms, of course.

I wish I had been clever enough to carry the thought one step further and to realize that the logical step for Germany was to patch up a truce with Russia, and keep it if possible while the business of fighting England was disposed of.

All of us in Berlin periodically talked *rapprochement* with Russia because it was an intriguing subject and obviously in Germany's strategic interest and because Hitler is the prime political opportunist of all time and would have no trouble pigeon-holing the old reliable diatribes to suit the needs of the moment. All of us came to realize that Russia was a far-off objective. But I think we all believed that Hitler must negotiate, if ever he did, with someone other than Stalin. We didn't appreciate Stalin's own realism, or Russia's urgent need to avoid head-on collision with any first-class military power at that stage of her development.

Being a foreign correspondent in Berlin was not very pleasant, most of the time. There was no censorship. You could get on the telephone to London or Paris and dictate anything you wanted, fact or opinion, and the only inconvenience involved at the moment was the faint clack-clack of the machines the Gestapo used to record your conversation. The only restrictions were, first, that the Nazi regime systematically dried up, by terrorization or other methods, every news source of which it had any inkling, and, second, that it could expel any offending correspondent on a few hours' notice.

In practice, the second restriction was seldom brought into play. The first proved sufficient, in the main, and it often

suited the Nazi book to have the outside world in a perpetual shudder over events inside the Reich.

There probably never was a group of men more cordially detested by the bulk of the Nazi party than was the foreign press. There were a few notable exceptions in the Propaganda Ministry and Foreign Office; they were men who understood that differences of opinion were inevitable and that the average reporter in Germany was not maliciously trying to start a war, ruin Europe, and condemn a couple of hundred million people to misery. The rest of the party was told we were doing just that.

The *Angriff*, which is Dr. Goebbels' contribution to world journalism, used to print alleged letters from its readers, starting, “Just let us know where these foreign atrocity mongers live, and we'll fix them,” or “Isn't it about time the lying foreign press was taught knee-bending?” It wasn't very effective as intimidation because it sounded strangely like the words taught every budding Nazi journalist, and not like the vocabulary of the ordinary German.

The *Zwölf Uhr Blatt*, a sporting sheet which used to map out Chamberlain's “only possible” policy for him three days a week, and commence its other three leading articles with, “Perhaps Herr Chamberlain failed to digest what we said yesterday,” blamed practically everything on us.

The Hitler Youth organ, when it was not worried about the iniquities of priests, and the *Schwarze Korps*, S.S. mouth-piece, when it wasn't lambasting the Jews or Churchill or Harold Ickes, drew funny pictures about us. We were horrid examples of Jewish-controlled, capitalist-inspired, Communist-dominated, lying venality.

I went once to the Gestapo headquarters to ask for a little routine information about the late Carl von Ossietzky, the

great liberal, whom the Nazis had hurriedly released from concentration camp when they heard he had received the Nobel Peace Prize (and who went direct from the camp to a hospital). The press official who received me refused to recognize my credentials.

"You could have had them forged," he said.

I suggested that he call Frederick Oechsner, the UP chief in Berlin, or the Propaganda Ministry, for verification of my identity.

"You have me wrong," he rapped out. "I haven't the slightest interest in knowing who you are or in helping you get any information whatever."

Of course, there was always a wry satisfaction in knowing that no party orator, small or big, could ever bear to ignore you as a group, and that even in Hitler's speeches you were always sure to put in an appearance in the role of "atrocious brothers" or "war mongers" or "lie merchants" or "international well poisoners," or as the *Journaille*. Dr. Goebbels, I believe, invented the last, combining *journalism* with *canaille*.

I always thought the Nazi opinion of the foreign correspondents was summed up best one night on my first tour of duty in Germany. A munitions factory south of Wittenberg had blown sky high. Four of us, two Dutchmen, an Englishman and myself, started down by car to investigate because the Propaganda Ministry was still trying to describe it as a fireworks plant.

We were driven by a scared little Berliner. We managed to bluff our way through the military cordon, and got to the gate of the factory. There we were promptly stopped, the car surrounded with bayonets. An officer stepped up to the

window and informed us we were spies. I thought the driver was going to faint.

“We’re not spies at all,” the Englishman told him. “If we were, we wouldn’t come driving up to your gate.”

A crowd of excited party uniforms was gathering in the darkness behind the officer.

“I tell you you’re spies,” he shouted. “We are informed that there were six men in this car, and you’ve left the sixth somewhere down the road to spy on us.”

“We’re not spies,” said one of the Dutchmen. “We’re from the foreign press.”

Out of the darkness from over the officer’s shoulder came a triumphant bellow from one of the party uniforms:

“*Aha! Das ist noch schlimmer!*—that’s even worse!”

It was at the *Taverne*, according to popular impression, that the foreign press cooked up its witches’ brew. Actually, the place was slightly less dastardly than that. It was a small Italo-German restaurant where you could eat and drink late, where the pianist knew a lot of foreign songs, and where, if you were lucky, the crowd at the newspaper table was exclusively English and American and you were not forced to struggle with all the old political arguments in a foreign language.

Its “political reliability” probably never had been very good because most of the German patrons were artists or actors or writers; the fact that we used it as a meeting place put it roughly on the moral level of the secret “Marxist” hide-outs which occasionally dribbled out a few ineffective leaflets.

There were a few congenial spirits among the German

press who used to like to drop in and talk about anything except politics and drink Kulmbacher beer, with an occasional schnapps to warm the throat. There were a few others who came in with a chip on the shoulder and a proselyting gleam in the eye. Occasionally there was somebody from the Propaganda Ministry or from one of the party organizations who perhaps had been told to find out what correspondents talk about when they're not poisoning international wells. Very often there were gentlemen, alone or in couples, who sat stolidly at the next table and drank beer as if their expense accounts were limited, and who hitched their chairs half around and seemed to be listening attentively.

The conversation couldn't have been very edifying. The Taverne was often useful for the exchange of scraps of information, and sometimes a correspondent on the prowl would come through Berlin with a lot of dope on the rest of Europe. But the talk was just as likely to be about the National League standings, or the Test Match, or movies or hang-overs. Most of the correspondents didn't care very much whether they were overheard because when you're prejudged an enemy of the state you might as well leave it at that.

When something big was about to happen, there was always a big crowd there at night. It was very seldom that any correspondent had the whole story, but almost everyone caught bits of it; and, by chewing them all up together, you could begin to get a picture of the truth.

Willy Lehmann, the proprietor, who was always slightly suspect by the authorities for his patrons, and by his patrons for the prices he charged, moved away from the table if the talk got political. That's just good technique, in Germany.

Otto Baarz's was a different matter. For men like Deuel

and Oechsner or myself, or most of the American Embassy staff, it was a place to be spoken of with reverence. It served what I am firmly convinced was the finest beer on earth.

Beer must be cared for, lovingly. It must be kept at a proper coolness, and drawn steadily and with understanding. Herr Baarz and his wife, who weighed five hundred pounds between them, were a tribute to their beer and their sausages and their cheese.

There were a dozen different kinds of beer at Baarz's, and most of the customers ate their lunch there several times a week and had their favorite brews. Far and away the most popular was the Pilsener, from across the border in Czechoslovakia. It came to the table with a stiff creamy collar which rose two or three inches above the top of the glass. When you saw it, it looked almost too good to drink; when you tasted it, you changed your mind.

We always half suspected that the final occupation of Czechoslovakia was the result of a deep plot by a camorra of old Baarz customers, for Pilsen had been left outside the borders of Germany when the Sudeten belt was occupied. I do know that never has there been a place so gloomy as Baarz's, during the height of the Czech crisis, when for a few days transportation was disrupted and no Pilsener came through to Berlin.

The big day at Baarz's was Tuesday, when the feature dish at noon was pig's knuckles and sauerkraut. Herr Baarz always had a standing order for about a dozen, to be saved for American patrons. It became necessary to order ahead because the supply grew inadequate as the cannon crowded out the butter and other food.

Nobody ever talked politics at Baarz's. It would have been sacrilege.

“Onkel” Emil Kickstein’s, in the arcade between Unter den Linden and the Friedrichstrasse, was a favorite spot for a quick one if you were working late at night. Onkel Emil specialized in Munich beer, and he nurtured it with care surpassed only by Otto Baarz. He liked to sit around in the evening, flanked by beer and schnapps, and tell stories. He was the only German pub owner I ever knew who saw to it that the house bought its share of the drinks.

I was drinking English bitter beer a few months ago with Euan Butler of the London *Times*, who left Berlin when the war started and now is an army captain.

“Some day,” Euan said, “I’m going to stand on Pariser Platz and watch an army of occupation march through the Brandenburger Tor—I hope. And it will compensate for everything.” Then a dreamy look came into his eyes.

“You know, I really think Onkel Emil and Otto Baarz ought to have a guard of honor, don’t you?” he said.

CHAPTER 6

THE CZECH crisis starts on page 19, with a dim stamp for a little mountain post near Bodenbach, somewhere up on the thick pine slopes east of Dresden. It's on many other pages, too; I spent most of the summer of 1938 shuttling between Berlin and Prague, or in the Sudeten belt where a combination of Czech stiffbackedness and synthetic Nazi propaganda created a major crisis in a few months.

The first of the year's plebiscites was to occur on May 22. Early the day before, the Czechs began mobilizing. Reynolds Packard, in Prague, phoned through that some coup or other was feared. He had to stay in Prague, and I went down to have a look at the border.

I did it by car with Larry Etter, a Californian who was a dentist but might better have been a reporter. Nowhere on the road down was there the slightest sign of German movement. In the fog-drenched hills on the border there was not a soldier to be seen.

The frontier itself had been closed, and a German guard told us it had been done by the Czechs "for some fool reason." We finally found a road which was still open, high up over a little-used saddle, threaded our way through the big con-

crete tank traps, and dropped steeply through the trees into Sudetenland.

In the dull little towns up close to the border, Sudetens stood in knots; and, when they recognized the Berlin plates on our car, snapped into the Hitler salute. One group asked us to switch the radio onto Berlin so that they could hear the news; a Czech gendarme overheard and ordered us to move along.

We drank a sickly mixture of raspberry juice and water in a little saloon. Everyone stopped talking when we entered. Liquor was outlawed until after the election. Nobody would let himself be drawn out until I showed a Berlin press card, and then everyone wanted to talk at once. A surprisingly large percentage, at that early date, believed all Hitler wanted was reasonable autonomy for the Sudetens; two or three youngsters in the heavy, white, wool stockings which were the Sudeten badge, laughed at that and said they would get *Anschluss* with Germany, and fight for it if need be.

The dark main roads down to Prague were periodically blocked with boulders, or lengths of rail, or big balks of timber sunk in the surface, or with overturned wagons and heavy farm machinery. On the bridges, holes had been hurriedly sunk for land mines, and most of the bridges were patrolled. It took us hours to skirt the barriers over muddy country lanes; sometimes a farm woman would run out with a lantern to show us the way, look at the German plates, and say, "Oh, when are you going to help us?"

Sometimes long lines of trucks or mobile antiaircraft or armored cars pounded past us coming from Prague. Once or twice we saw lights in the woods, where troops were settling

down into the massive concrete of the Schober Line and tuning up the big Skoda guns.

Next day we watched Sudetenland vote, and everything was as it should be. The people were quiet and orderly, like a lot of farmers anywhere, dressed in their Sunday best and out for a walk on the road. Everywhere, the German plates brought a salute, and that caused the closest thing to an incident on that first election day.

Larry, at the wheel, had taken to answering the salutes, lifting one hand from the wheel. As he pointed out, the people were so friendly you couldn't very well just stare and pass on. Then we came to a sentry post on the road, and the soldier on duty stepped out and held up his right hand to signal us to stop for search.

Larry half saw the gesture, gave the Czech an automatic Hitler salute, and drove on. Then Eleanor Packard, who was with us, turned to look out the back window. The sentry was racing for his rifle which,—providentially,—he had left standing against a tree. She shouted to Larry to stop.

The Czech was very mad, and the bayonet he stuck in through the front window was very long. Then we showed him our American passports. He looked at them closely and suspiciously. Then his face broke into a grin.

“Voodrow Veelson,” he cried, and shook hands with each of us.

After that, we carried a flag on the radiator.

However, that day in May wasn't the real crisis, and neither was any of the other minor flare-ups on through the summer. Nothing much ever happened except that the scream of the German propaganda rose and grew hoarser

each week, and the stiffness of the Czechs gradually went out of them as the pressure increased and their allies grew more evasive and jittery.

In May, Czechoslovakia was a small country sure of itself, well armed, aware of its danger, and willing to fight. The troops moved into the line in good order. In the high hills, new guns went into position, and the big trees were felled to permit them to sweep the roads. Traps were prepared for the German tanks; new lines of pillboxes marched across the grain fields farther back, toward Prague. The people in the cities were supplied with gas masks and shown how to take cover and to do first aid and fight fires. The huge factories at Pilsen and Brünn poured out more guns and shells.

Then the Runciman mission came, and Czechs began to see what was in store. France, and France's ally, Britain, had allowed Hitler to go one step too far and were beginning to realize that he was several steps ahead of them. Neither government was mentally equipped to bluff Hitler; they didn't fool the Czechs either. The speeches and statements which were meant to sound strong were worthless because Allied policy was fundamentally so weak. By mid-August the Czechs more than half realized that they were as good as sold out. And some of them, at least, knew that the sell-out would be only the first step toward complete domination by Germany.

The Sudetens in May were careful. In Eger, heart of the movement, few people would talk. Those who did said they wanted only their just rights. In July, they spoke openly of force. By the end of August, there was no question of anything but *Anschluss*.

Prague took the mounting despair of the summer as befits

the most graceful of all Europe's capitals. From the bank of the Moldau, the old town rises steep, in massed old masonry and heavy towers and mellow baroque, to the great Hradcany palace and the high cathedral. Across the river, seen from the heights, is the “new” town, where the turrets of the Gothic towers rise sharply up out of the perpetual blue smoke haze from crowded chimney stacks.

Prague is Gothic, and baroque, and much that is older and newer. It is the Bohemian kings, and the German knights, and the Swedish armies, and the Hussites. It is the Thirty Years' War and a score of others. It looks somehow so completely beyond the reach of history that nothing, medieval siege or Nazi occupation, seems more than an incident which may leave its few small marks, but will never change the whole.

That was small consolation to the Czechs in the crisis of 1938. That year of 1938, when “nothing happened,” reached a pitch never attained in 1939, when the war actually did start. Maybe there was something inevitable about it by that time. Maybe the reactions of the people who were going to have to fight the war had been dulled by constant crisis. But the summer of 1938 was all tension, and its center was the Hotel Ambassador in Prague.

The Ambassador was another of those hotels which come to the surface with every big crisis. It was not the biggest or the newest or the best in town. It was the place where you always met everyone, where all the rumors went the rounds, and where most of the news from Czechoslovakia was written.

The lobby was always crowded with tipsters and correspondents and eastern Europeans on some sort of business, and diplomats off duty for a few hours, and Czech officials

and Sudeten contact men, and the usual quota of unidentifiables whose business might have been anything at all, but probably was not public. The last time I saw de Wet was there. He had come to Ethiopia in 1935, with a pork pie hat and a grenadier mustache as if to emphasize his British nationality. He was a soldier of fortune and he wanted to fight for Haile Selassie. In Prague he was secretive about his business and said something about the Czech air force. Early in 1941 I read in an American paper a Berlin dispatch about an Englishman named de Wet who had been sentenced to death for espionage.

Reynolds and Eleanor Packard, who have teamed up on crises for years, held the fort in Prague for the UP and as far as I could see existed for months on beer, club sandwiches, and coffee. None of the correspondents got much chance to leave the hotel, except for hurried trips to the press bureau, or the foreign office, or Sudeten headquarters, or sometimes to some hot spot out in the country. It was too important to be in the place where the news always showed up.

Covering the news in central Europe is about thirty per cent getting the facts and seventy per cent discarding the rumors. The correspondents in Prague did it by appropriating a prominent table in the lobby where the rumors were sure to land, then chewing them over together for mutual protection. Rumor killed at least 100,000 people on that table top during the summer, but none of the corpses ever got into print.

Outside the Ambassador the little men of Prague, who might have to fight, doggedly followed out their routines in the mood of hopeless hopefulness which was gripping the cannon fodder of Germany and France and England and the

rest. They just did their usual jobs because they always had done them and because there really wasn't anything to be done to stave off whatever was coming. None of them, I think, had any idea that they would be doing their normal jobs for long, whether or not the 1938 crisis became the Second World War.

The restaurants were full, possibly because everyone was too tight-drawn to want to stay home. The students sang, when they weren't demonstrating, in their favorite little Slovakian wine shops. The hotels were crowded, even if their patrons weren't tourists. Bata had its usual midsummer sale, and the haberdashery shops still stocked American shirts and underwear.

Up in Karlsbad and the other famous bath resorts the big hotels were like the grave because nobody cared to risk landing in the midst of a war, just for sulphur water or mud baths. But the peasants round about were getting in their grain, and the hops were harvested for the great breweries, and the Skoda and Brünn workers continued turning out fine arms for Czechoslovakia (to be taken over soon, lock, stock, and barrel by the Nazis) or for other little countries (to be absorbed more gradually).

There were many men under arms. Almost every day, recruits in civvies with their belongings in a suitcase, or new soldiers in khaki with shoes that looked stiff and brutal, marched through the streets to barracks.

A few people who had reason to be afraid left for Switzerland or eastern Europe or, if they were lucky and could get a visa, for the United States. There were not very many of them because the average person doesn't really panic easily, and prefers to stick things out until the crisis breaks.

Over in Germany, except for the hundreds of thousands who worked on the West Wall and the men who had been called into the army, everyone did just about the same sorts of things as the Czechs, and waited as they were waiting.

CHAPTER 7

AS THE Nuremberg party convention approached, everyone in Germany knew that the Czech crisis must be settled within a month—war or peace, it made no difference. And Nuremberg was the place where it would be brought to a head.

Young Nazis laughed openly about the Runciman mission, which fuss-budgeted around Czechoslovakia and obviously would never get anywhere; about Chamberlain and his pious hopes and his weak-kneed warnings; about Daladier and French industrial production. A French air general and his party were invited to Berlin, shown the superb new Messerschmitt 110, and a few bombers which were faster than any French fighter plane, and sent back home full of food and worry.

The *Parteitag* at Nuremberg, as Hitler once told a group of correspondents, is primarily a reward to good, foot-slog-ging party members who can't be given a cash bonus or a promotion, but who can be given a week of backslapping and marching and spectacles and shouting and the feeling that they and the people who run things have gotten together and put things on the right track for the year to come.

But in 1938 it was a perfect sounding board for the

speeches needed to bring things to a head, and nobody paid much attention to all the routine reports and the minor oratory and the fireworks for the kids and the usual anti-Jewish, anti-Communist exhibition. People were much more interested in whether Konrad Henlein really was in town, and how many times the British Ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, really had tried to see Hitler, and whether the British government really had issued a convincing warning, for once.

It wasn't what the eye saw in Nuremberg which drove a hundred and fifty correspondents almost crazy; any one of them could have described any given Nazi gathering in his sleep, and written the speeches. It was what was going on somewhere behind the six-footers in Black S.S. uniform who guarded the entrance to Hitler's hotel. It was the sort of thing you might get a faint hint of in the seething Grand Hotel, where everyone pushed his way back and forth through the lobby trying to look as if he were waiting for an important appointment. But it was the sort of thing you never could check accurately, short of the six or eight men who always know what is about to happen.

About half the correspondents lived in a special train, off on a siding next to an iron foundry, where the clanging was almost as loud at night as the blasts of oratory by day. The rest stayed in a mad house called the Württemberger Hof, which in normal times was a quite respectable hotel.

You couldn't possibly work at the hotel unless you stayed home when everyone else trooped off to look at another spectacle; there was always someone, probably a tourist from Boston or Bucharest, breathing down your neck or monopolizing the telephone. Many of the tourists were put in the press sections at the various meetings because there was no

room for them anywhere else and because the ingratiating young man from Munich who ran the press arrangements had a weakness for old ladies who might go back home and tell all their friends what nice people the Nazis were.

Two-thirds of the foreigners in Nuremberg were there on invitation because they thought National Socialism was a holy bulwark against Communism. They were carefully paid off, at Nuremberg, with front-row seats for all the spectacles, and lots of food and wine, and an invitation to tea with the Fuehrer along with several hundred other people. They thought we were poison. Many of the rest were there because they just didn't know what it was all about. They were the sort who used to appear in Germany each summer for a two-weeks stay and who, just because they could get lots of butter and two eggs for breakfast at the hotels tourists patronize, and because they never had seen a Jew pursued down Unter den Linden by a mob armed with axes and a lynching rope, would rush back home with stories about how biased the foreign correspondents were. They sometimes tried to reform us, usually when we were busiest.

There were a few foreigners there because they honestly wanted to get the feel of National Socialism. You can get it in a few days at the party convention as you can nowhere else. It's pageantry, and corps maneuvers, and hysteria, and ideology or *mythos* or whatever you call it, and mass force and efficiency, and a hundred other ingredients. You can't conceivably come away from that week of thudding boots and party shouters and crowd roars with a coherent idea of what you have seen. If you are lucky, there are a few scenes which stand out in your mind.

I remember the sheer, shrill joy of tens of thousands of children from the party's youth organizations, when Hitler

made them a brief speech all of their own. They were kids who had been brought up in healthy outdoor life, and looked it. Of course, the Hitler Youth organizations' activities don't leave very much time for the family or the church to exert any influence, but nobody worries about that.

Hitler made a big point of loving young people. He said once in a speech: “We no longer need our former political enemies: we have their children.”

I remember how the week of marching and countermarching culminated in a military show which beat against your chest with noise, and which sent thundering over one huge field more tanks and guns and modern planes than there were, in all probability, in the whole British Empire.

I remember sitting in the lobby of the hotel, trying to pick up the speech of Marshal Goering, who began the build-up for the Hitler tirade of two days later and for the series of crises and meetings which led to Munich and “peace in our time.”

The lobby was jammed with Stormtroopers and minor party officials, well equipped with beer, who broke into such frenzies of cheering and boot stamping and howls that they succeeded now and again in drowning out the Marshal—a man whose oratorical style is not a honeyed one. The Marshal gave them plenty of chance. He tore the Czechs to pieces.

Everyone was highly amused at the dozen or so correspondents who had stayed at the hotel instead of going to the field, because the Marshal's speech had not been given out in advance and someone had to try to get it from the radio. There was one bull-necked gentleman—the type usually known as a “three ringer”—who kept leaping to his feet

with the sweat drops flying from his face, leaning over our table, and shouting:

“Tell *that* to your damned democracies.”

I remember the lobby of the Grand Hotel that night, when Nuremberg was full of rumor. There had just been another statement of some sort in London. French troops were still moving up into the line. Some people expected Germany to march within forty-eight hours. Matters were long since out of the hands of the ordinary diplomatic missions and in those of the chancelleries or perhaps the general staffs.

The lobby was bedlam. Everyone was trying to button-hole everyone else. Only one man seemed neglected. He was the German ambassador to one of the powers most critically connected with the Czech crisis; it was notorious that for weeks, because he was an old-style diplomat and a conservative, he had known next to nothing of developments; so he stood there confusedly, in his new silver-and-black diplomatic uniform—diplomats had just been uniformed, too,—and his state of mind seemed to be reflected in his ineffective little diplomatic dress sword, which he had hung back-end-to from his fancy belt.

He smiled at me and said, “No, it’s no use. I don’t know anything.”

The next day I met Hitler for the first time.

I had heard scores of his speeches, over the radio or at Reichstag sessions or at the mammoth May Day extravaganzas at Tempelhof. I knew that Hitler, more completely than any other speaker I had ever heard, understands a crowd—a German crowd, at least—and can feel out for its mood and master it and sweep it along with him and leave it throbbing with his own emotion. I discovered that day

that in a small group whose temper probably is hostile he can be ill at ease.

There were a dozen correspondents or so in the party, all invited to have lunch “with” the Fuehrer in the mellow old castle which stands guard over Nuremberg. We drove from the huge Stormtroop mass meeting at the Luitpoldhain to the castle, in Hitler’s entourage. There were eight or ten big black touring cars, first his, then two or three filled with high officials or the S.S. bodyguard, then ourselves.

The tiny sidewalks on either side were jammed, and each of the little leaded windows in the old half-timbered houses was hung with flags, and full of people. Two-thirds of the crowd were women. The cheering, from a few feet away, was ear splitting. Because nobody knew who we were, the correspondents came in for their share of *heils*. Captain Fritz Wiedemann, Hitler’s adjutant, drew alongside in another car. He knew many correspondents well.

“My God, they’re even cheering you,” he shouted gleefully. “Now aren’t you ashamed of all that bunk you’ve written?”

At the castle we had a last cigarette; no one smokes in Hitler’s presence, and in hotels where he happens to be staying there are little notices requesting you to refrain while he’s in the room. Then we were presented.

Hitler received us in a small, gorgeously timbered room high up in the castle. A half dozen close friends were around him, including Joachim von Ribbentrop, Wiedemann, and Rudolf Hess, then Hitler’s deputy. The Fuehrer was a small, simple-appearing man in contrast to the others. His uniform seemed to be of cheaper cloth than theirs, and more simply tailored. His hair was a rather neutral brown, slightly shot with gray. The pores of his skin were large. His handshake

was firm, but not impressive. There was nothing particularly impressive about him until I saw his eyes.

Hitler's eyes protrude slightly. When he smiles, which is not often in conversation, they kindle. When he talks of beauty, particularly architectural beauty, they go soft. Usually they are the clearest, most direct, hardest, most compelling eyes I have ever seen. It was only after we had left him that I realized I hadn't noticed what color they were.

We were all full of questions. Nobody had had a word direct from Hitler for days on the crisis he had caused. But we had been warned on the way in that we must not question him on any subject he did not bring up himself. That left the opening up to him, and I suddenly realized that he didn't know quite how to begin.

One of his blunt-cut hands picked, almost bashfully, at the raised side seam of his uniform trousers. His eyes traveled up and down the group. He coughed slightly once or twice. Then he opened with—of all things: “Gentlemen, it's a very nice day, I think.”

He said a few casual, rather disjointed sentences about the weather. Then he led us out on the old stone balcony which looks out on the jumble of roofs and chimney pots of the medieval city. It is one of the loveliest sights in Europe, and one of Hitler's favorites. Every trace of self-consciousness, if it had been that, vanished. He breathed in a great draft of air, and seemed to absorb the view with it.

For twenty minutes he talked, not about foreign policy or the Jews or the evils of democracy, but about beauty in nature, and the lovely city of Florence, which he had seen a few months before for the first time.

Several times he exclaimed, “Oh, that lovely Florence.” It was the same mood which struck him, in the midst of

later crisis, when he first saw the panorama of Prague and cried, “I never knew Prague could be so beautiful.”

Hitler shook hands briefly when we had finished talking about art, and we left. It had been a beautiful job of keeping the conversation at the opposite ends of the world from what everyone wanted to know. That particular group of correspondents—only two or three of them were sympathetic—would have been capable of a hundred political questions, if they had been given the slightest opening.

But it was something more than a neat bit of conversational footwork. It showed the power of complete, if only momentary, detachment which for years has acted as a freshener on Hitler. It is one reason why he has survived in amazingly good shape the bitter years of fighting in his rise to power and the constant strain of the crises he created in his campaign to make Germany great again.

That Sunday morning every chancellery in Europe was full staffed and glued to its long-distance phones. Hitler at the moment seemed more interested in Florentine art. A couple of weeks later, at the Godesberg conference, matters reached a stalemate. Chamberlain retired to his mountain-top hotel and called London long and earnestly. For hours it looked like a breakoff. The Fuehrer gazed at the Rhine for a while, and then went down into the garden of the hotel and fed nuts to the squirrels.

Hitler ate lunch that day in Nuremberg, in a small separate room with three others. The table was simply set, and a bar of chocolate lay by his plate. On the sideboard behind his chair was a huge platter of halved hard-boiled eggs, each heaped with fat black caviar. Hitler is said to love caviar, and it is supposed to have been one of Goering's regrets for years that relations with Russia were so bad he couldn't at-

tend receptions at the Soviet Embassy, where it is served by the quart.

It was Hitler's closing speech which was to be the climax of everything that year at Nuremberg. Usually the final speech had been good, resounding oratory, full of all the catch phrases and stock denunciations which the party cohorts loved like old friends. This time, there was nothing conventional about it.

Hitler stood alone, the night of September 12, 1938, one-third of the way down the long narrow congress hall. Behind him, blood red, were banked the hundreds of standards of the Stormtroops of the whole Reich. Before him was a hand-picked audience, Germans, Austrians and a big block from Sudetenland, which he knew would respond to every note he sounded.

First he hurled the West Wall in the faces of France and England. Then he talked of the German army and air force, and of the great stocks of food and raw materials which he said would make Germany invulnerable to blockade. Then he turned to Czechoslovakia, and brought the crowd to its feet with the most biting attack he had ever made on any nation, and the mob roar surged and broke against the red-draped rostrum.

I talked with Fred Oechsner over the phone that night.

“I'll bet that had 'em in the aisles, didn't it?” he said. “Well, you'd better get back over the Czech border tomorrow morning, and see what happens. And kiss the Czechs good-by.”

CHAPTER 8

I **CROSSED** the border at Cheb, now called Eger, and I saw the bewilderment, the confusion, and finally the revolt that swept Sudetenland like a prairie fire. When I got back to Germany it was September 16. Chamberlain had been to Berchtesgaden, and Hitler had measured his man across a small round table.

Everyone in Germany knew that there would be another conference between the Fuehrer and Chamberlain. Possibly no German except Hitler, who long since had sized up the combination against him, dared hope for the victory which was about to be won. But at least there wasn't going to be any war until the two men had talked things over again, and the people were grateful for that.

In Berlin the papers printed long and vivid dispatches about the poor, tortured Sudetens who were being driven across the border in thousands and had armed themselves—from what arsenal, was left to the imagination—to fight the Czechs back from the Reich border. I met a few Germans who seriously believed that Czechoslovakia was about to attack Germany.

Foreigners who had no reason to stay in Germany were

getting out. They were tourists at the fag end of a summer trip, or those who had spent years in Europe for no particular reason and who now had rediscovered their love for the United States. My mother and father were in Berlin, booked to sail about September 20. At the last minute to their delight they acquired the small daughter of two friends in Berlin, to look after on the way over. The friends, like most other Americans in town, remained. They had a job to do; and for what it was worth, Berlin unquestionably had the finest anti-aircraft defenses in Europe and was safer than any other capital.

At that time people put a lot of stock in anti-aircraft guns as a sure preventive of bombing; they did not realize that planes which are willing to bomb from twenty thousand feet in the blackout, without bothering to aim for specific objectives, might fly over with almost a hundred per cent immunity. The people of London have since found that out.

The second conference was called for Godesberg, a little, sleepy cure resort on the Rhine, which is always at its best in the lazy autumn. It is one of Hitler's favorite spots.

Godesberg drowsed as usual, and the old gentlemen strolled sedately under the thick trees along the river, and the old ladies drank tea and ate pflaumkuchen—without whipped cream, in these days—on the hotel terraces. Behind the hills to the west, the West Wall was being set in its molds and ribbed with steel; but Godesberg got none of the echo, except that there were few working men left around town, and most of the cars had been commandeered.

Then it was suddenly doused in power politics and low comedy. The confusion was remarkable.

There were only a few correspondents in Godesberg, plus

the usual swarm of big, black-uniformed S.S. to hold back the cheering throng, when Hitler arrived and went to the Hotel Dreesen, where he often stayed—where he had been, in fact, the night before the Blood Purge of June 30, 1934. The correspondents were quartered at the Godesberger Hof, a couple of hundred yards downstream, which had led a sedate and undoubtedly dull existence for all its forty years.

The Godesberger Hof had two telephone lines that dated back to its infancy. These were promptly booked hours in advance by gentlemen who felt they had powerful think pieces to write. Somebody hurriedly rigged up eight more and imported a few girl operators from Cologne to supplement the aging *fräulein* who had been with the hotel switchboard since the start.

Then Chamberlain arrived at Cologne airport, jumped into a car, and was driven off with screaming sirens and beefy outriders to the hotel on the Petersberg, across the river from Hitler. He had left the famous umbrella in the plane, and an S.S. motorcyclist was duly sent roaring back to Cologne to fetch it. The British Prime Minister was to be made perfectly comfortable and at his ease, of course.

By the time Chamberlain came down his mountain, rolled onto the little ferry, and crossed the river for the first talk of the meeting, there were around two hundred correspondents waiting for him, and the telephone service had established a new high for demoralization.

Webb Miller was running the UP coverage of the negotiations and specializing on the British delegation. He stayed on the cool heights of the Petersberg with Chamberlain. I drew the Germans and the Godesberger Hof.

Chamberlain and Hitler met. One not-too-reliable eastern

European correspondent claimed he had walked by the conference window and had seen Hitler pounding the table and Chamberlain looking worried. The conference broke up, and one way or another it became known that Germany had demanded all of Sudetenland by October 1. Things were deadlocked.

All the next day Chamberlain stayed on his mountain and periodically talked with London. Hitler fed the squirrels. It looked like a possible breakup. There were any number of powerful think pieces to be written, and periodic spot news. The telephone situation reached the point of complete hysteria.

It took anywhere up to five hours to get through a normal call anywhere, even to Berlin. I began booking simultaneous *Blitzgespräche*—lightning calls, which cost three times ordinary calls—to Berlin, London, Paris, and Amsterdam, and talking to whichever office came through first. There were at least fifty people trying to phone at any given moment. One girl was carried out in hysterics. Another took quietly to double brandies from the dining room.

Things got so bad that Webb, whose balcony was in sight across the river from my hotel, put in a lightning call to Paris and had them send me an urgent cable, telling me he wanted me to come over for a few minutes to confer with him.

In between trips to the telephone office to curse the whole German postal system, correspondents stood on the terrace outside and watched for signs of Chamberlain coming down the mountain. Two or three elderly European newspapermen with by-lines known everywhere, who preferred to cover the news from their rooms, appeared now and again on their balconies with field glasses, surveyed the scene, and ducked back in for a drink and a few hundred more words on what

might happen. A German correspondent started a sweep-stake on the date of occupation.

Movement was complicated by the fact that the conference had attracted all the tourists left in the Rhineland, and most of the local yokels. They couldn't get into Hitler's hotel because of the S.S. It would have cost twenty pfennigs on the ferry and a long walk uphill to get to Chamberlain's. But nobody stopped them at the entrance to the Godesberger Hof. So they streamed through in great droves, dragging their budding children and their aged aunts, watching those funny men trying to put through telephone calls to normalcy.

As night came on, Sir Horace Wilson, then Neville Chamberlain, ventured downhill. Things got worse. A lot of the tourists had decided that the Godesberger Hof performance was the best show within reach and settled down with a bottle of Rhine wine or some beer. One rumor after another was tossed up and batted around the lobby. Newspapermen told one another long and involved stories about how hard it was to telephone, and longed for the police court “beat.” British correspondents emerged wild eyed and perspiring from the booths after long calls from the press lords in Fleet Street, who were finally getting windy.

There was only one touch of calm in the scene. Ralph Barnes of the New York *Herald Tribune*, one of the finest newspapermen in Europe, sat at a small table, waiting for a direct call to New York and busy writing his piece. Ralph had a marvelous power of concentration—only he or a boss riveter could have concentrated there that night. He interrupted his work only to rise, every so often, and shout:

“Listen, you guys. Was it Bismarck or Napoleon who said, ‘Who rules Bohemia, rules Europe?’”

Ralph was killed, early in the Greco-Italian campaign, on

an operational flight in a British bomber which crashed in the mountains of Jugoslavia.

There was a cocktail party in Berlin, two nights later, with Chamberlain back in London and Hitler inaccessible in Berlin. It was at the home of Donald Heath, First Secretary at the American Embassy. It was the weirdest party I ever attended.

Only a few German officials came. They stood silently by themselves, obviously ill at ease. The foreigners congregated in small groups and talked in low voices. Everyone was checking up on spare gasoline, if any, and extra seats in cars which would head for Copenhagen or the Dutch frontier with women and children; the embassy that day had set up the machinery for evacuating Americans if war came. A dinner set for that night was hurriedly canceled; the hostess was leaving. Everyone kept looking at watches and everyone went home early because Chamberlain was to speak at eight o'clock and nobody wanted to miss it.

Chamberlain spoke in a tired, old voice, and said that Hitler's demands had been “most unreasonable.” At the same time word got around that Germany was determined to march next afternoon, unless France and England gave in.

That was the night the divisions marched endlessly through the streets of Berlin, and the knots of people on the corners watched with dull eyes.

The buses ran as usual next morning, taking Berlin for fifteen-pfennig or twenty-five-pfennig rides. Anna, dean of the Unter den Linden girls who cater to the Essen arms salesmen and the *Gauleiters* from down in the provinces, got off the 19 bus as usual at 9:45 A. M. and took up her beat. The

Potsdamer Platz was still a mess from the new subway which seemed never to get any nearer completion. None of it seemed right, somehow, because underneath the normalcy everything was being tightened to the last notch, in case the crash came.

All German ships less than halfway across the Atlantic had been recalled. I was glad my parents were due in New York that day. All uniforms, except for the staff officers on the Tirpitz Ufer where the War Ministry stands, had vanished from the streets. If you looked up as you passed the I. G. Farben building on Unter den Linden, you could see the anti-aircraft-gun crew which had moved in the night before, leaning over the edge of the roof and watching the traffic move.

That was the moment when the excitement which had carried through four months suddenly went out of the air, and I realized that, unless something gave way, the bombers would be let loose in three or four hours. I was walking down the street with Demaree Bess, then of the *Christian Science Monitor*, who had seen war in the Far East.

At the same moment, each of us started to tell the other that we didn't have any idea of war, that what we had seen had been almost casual and not brutal in its effects on us, and that what we stood on the edge of was too terrible even to imagine.

Neither of us had seen Spain, where the new technique had gotten a tentative trial. But I remembered Ethiopia which, as far as correspondents were concerned, had been ninety-five per cent a camping trip, and a pageant of wild brown men stamping through the dust and shaking their spears and shields before the Emperor and shouting death to Italy. China had been ghastly enough for the millions who

were crushed by the campaigns. But we had not been part of it. Nine times out of ten, we watched it from the sanctity of the soil taken over by the foreigners, and called for a second whisky soda from the house boy when the excitement exhausted the first. There weren't going to be any stage boxes for this one.

There was talk that morning of a long telephone conversation between Hitler and Mussolini. Nobody knew much about it. I had lunch at the Adlon, two hours before the deadline, with Dr. Carl Bömer, chief of the foreign-press section of the Propaganda Ministry, who understood the problems of the non-German correspondents and had always been outstandingly helpful. That noon he was distraught and uncommunicative. Neither of us was able to keep up a conversation. Two or three times he went to the telephone to put in a call and returned to the table apparently as worried as before.

Then Chamberlain got up in Commons and announced that there would be one last conference at Munich the next day, September 29, and it was obvious that Britain and France had been forced to give in and that Hitler would get everything he had demanded all along.

Munich was tragic from start to finish, not only because it was a complete debacle for the democracies, but because it was obviously just a stopgap which might delay war one more year. Britain and France sold out Czechoslovakia because they were too woefully unprepared to help her. Having yielded once in the face of Axis threats, they were committed. Either they must continue to preserve the type of “peace” Hitler wanted by giving in whenever he made new demands, or they must fight.

If there was any consolation for Chamberlain at Munich, it was in the crowds that greeted him when he arrived and that stood massed around his hotel waiting for each appearance. There was no mistaking the look on the faces, or the sincerity of the cheers. The masses around the station when Mussolini's train pulled in gave the usual “spontaneous” reception. The people who cheered Chamberlain—it was not a mob sound, like most German cheers—were common ordinary Germans who did not want war and who gave the gaunt old Englishman the full credit for avoiding it.

Munich was Chamberlain's day of triumph, so far as those people outside the hotel were concerned. If they could have looked into the conference room, perhaps they would have sensed that Munich was just another step toward inevitable conflict.

The correspondents couldn't see into the conference room, either, but they could imagine what it was like. The opposing principals told the whole story of what went on: Hitler, conscious of his own strength and of the initiative which lay in his hands; Mussolini, anxious for peace but playing Hitler's game to the hilt; Daladier, who, if ever a man's looks meant anything, was beaten and demoralized before he ever entered the room; Chamberlain, old and tired and overstrained from his two earlier trips to Germany, and backed by a nation less than half prepared.

Correspondents in Berlin began checking up, when they got a breathing spell after the Sudeten occupation, and they came to the conclusion that Germany had not been too well fixed for war. The concrete in some sections of the West Wall was still wet. The army did not, it seemed, have all the heavy equipment it needed for a major campaign. Despite Goering's boasts about reserves of raw materials and food,

supply was still the big problem. Germany won at Munich because her leadership was wholly willing to fight if it had to and because it knew that nobody else would go that far.

It also became apparent that given another year Germany would have a stupendous arsenal and whole mountains of copper and other metals and oil and food. She might gradually be exhausted by a long war, but the democracies would have to be very thoroughly prepared, themselves. I think we all made the mistake of assuming that England and France really were using the time gained at Munich to put themselves in shape. The roar of the German machinery was so loud in our ears that we couldn't hear the wheezes and creaks from beyond the Rhine.

The first indication correspondents had of how completely things were going the German way was the fact that the Germans were doing all the talking. There was no news to be gotten at British or French headquarters. Every hour or two the Germans reported progress. By midafternoon, the main details of the agreement had been pipe-lined out. It was just a question of how long it would take to put it in legal words and to fly someone over from Prague to accept it on behalf of the Czechs.

It took until midevening.

The Germans, glory be, still got a sort of wry amusement out of political jokes, a whole range from the innumerable Goering uniform fasties to a few bitter—and whispered—cracks at the Fuehrer himself.

There was already a Munich joke in circulation, born of the methods used to create the Sudeten crisis and Hitler's own oft-trumpeted determination to “answer the Sudetens' call for help.”

It seems that as the four conferees left the room where they had signed the treaty, they noticed a large bowl, containing a lone goldfish, on the table in the hall. Someone suggested they see who could catch it.

Daladier cautiously rolled up a starched cuff, put his hand into the water, and made a tentative grab, but the fish easily eluded him.

Chamberlain tried unsuccessfully to hook the fish with his umbrella handle.

Mussolini shot his chin out, put on his most awesome scowl, and lunged with both hands. He almost caught the fish.

Hitler stepped up with a teacup, and began bailing the water out. In a few minutes there was only a quarter inch or so left in the bottom of the bowl, and the fish flopped around dismally on its side.

“Grab him, grab him,” cried the admiring Duce.

“No,” said Hitler, striking a knightly pose. “First he must cry for help.”

I was sitting with Webb Miller in an old hotel in Linz, next night, when word came that Chamberlain had landed in England with his supplemental agreement with Hitler clutched in hand, and had talked of “peace in our time.”

“God, how silly,” Webb said.

Britain and France had been caught flat footed, materially and mentally, and Chamberlain and Daladier knew it. They were on the defensive from the start and were never given a chance to counterattack. It was just a question of what small concessions they might be able to win from Hitler and his “most unreasonable” demands. In effect, they got none.

CHAPTER 9

THE MURDER in November, 1938, of an unimportant embassy secretary in Paris by a young Jew gave National Socialism an excuse for one of those characteristic performances which, as the *Times* of London said in 1934, "make the name of Nazi to stink in the nostrils of the world."

Let it be said at the start that the nation-wide pogrom which followed the murder of vom Rath appalled the overwhelming majority of all Germans, and a good many high Nazis. The people were appalled because barbarity of that sort is not a national trait. The high Nazis, most of them, were appalled because as usual they hadn't had the slightest conception of the revulsion which would greet the news abroad.

Propaganda Ministry officials assured us, after the business was all over and the clipsheets of scathing comment from abroad had started to pour in, that "nobody wanted this to happen, and you can be sure it never will happen again." That was a familiar refrain.

The fact was that during the entire reign of the hoodlums recruited from the Hitler Youth and the Stormtroops, I saw only one man who made the slightest effort to halt the

outrages. A few people in the watching crowds shook their heads or murmured. But the great majority of the German people are indifferent to the sufferings of the Jews and much too concerned with their own affairs to worry. The rest, who might like to do something to help them, are absolutely powerless. And of course you become unenviably conspicuous, in Germany, if you show any sympathy for a Jew.

Everyone knew that something spectacular in the way of "retaliation" was in the cards when vom Rath died, because the party had had lots of time to prepare while the French doctors tried to save his life. We waited all that evening at the Taverne for the word to come. Finally someone phoned in, "they're giving the Tauentzienstrasse a going over."

That was only two blocks away, a street full of better-class shops, many of them Jewish. It was midnight when the affair started, and there were only a few late strollers from the cafés and beer halls to watch.

The gang detailed to work the Tauentzienstrasse was attacking a fashionable jeweler's when I got there. They had broken through the ornamental night grille on the big window and were already inside. Somebody had been thoughtful enough to bring along a couple of crowbars, which was fortunate. A lot of the silver pieces like coffee urns and loving cups would have stood up pretty well under ordinary battering.

There were a dozen men and boys at work, smashing everything in sight, jumping up and down on the ruins to make sure nothing escaped. Someone concentrated his activities on the big mirrors and the glass showcases, hurling heavy silver pieces at them to make sure they were adequately broken. I saw one man slip some small object into his pocket.

The burglar alarm was ringing steadily, and there were other bells going, on down the street, but of course nobody came.

Twenty or thirty people stood on the sidewalk outside watching a big policeman who stood helplessly shouting through the window at the wreckers, “My God, are you human?” He was crying. Nobody inside paid any attention to him.

On the Kurfürstendamm, which is the most fashionable shopping street in Berlin, several gangs were at work. The terrace of a Jewish-owned café was smeared with some tarry, foul-smelling concoction. Jewish windows as high as two stories above the street were smashed. The stocks in stores were either ruined or looted. If the proprietor lived on the premises and happened to resist, he could always be beaten up.

Somebody set fire to a synagogue, and the Berlin fire department, which is very efficient, saw to it that the flames did not spread to the good Aryan buildings on either side. The fire in the synagogue attracted a lot of the ordinary wreckers, who stood around and chatted gaily and agreed that this was the sort of stuff to give them.

On Olivaerplatz, where I lived, the contents of a food store were strewn all over the roadway. Even the little drugstore, whose proprietor had sometimes given medicine to people who had no money, was wrecked. It was a grand night, all over Germany, for the party riffraff.

The next day they got around to the Unter den Linden shops. In sections like the Grosse Frankfurterstrasse the gangs went around making sure they had left nothing undone in the darkness. I saw one old Jew, just off Kurfürstendamm, chased by about twenty men. It was all in a spirit

of good fun, and he was allowed to escape after he had been knocked down a few times. On the Tauentzienstrasse, they carried out the body of a man who had shot himself.

Several American women I knew made a point that day of pushing through the cordons and shopping in those Jewish stores which had reopened, or of sitting on the yellow park benches with the black "J" which were there for the Jews. Larry Etter took another vacation from dentistry and turned cameraman, and had his films confiscated for his pains.

That was about all there was to the public aspect of the pogrom. As usual the real refinements in method were reserved for the persecution of individuals.

Of course, the Jews lost their shops to "politically reliable" Aryans; there was an oppressive fine; they were forced out of homes which were considered too good for them; they were informed that they were considered incapable of driving cars; and there was forced liquidation of all sorts of valued personal possessions. And they were forced to adopt given names which henceforth would stamp them as Jews. But that was all more or less in the routine.

Stories began drifting in about the new Jewish concentration camp at Buchenwald, where conditions were so bad that all the old ones like Sachsenhausen or Dachau were sweet on the tongue. Buchenwald was the place where all newcomers were lined up and forced to stand at attention for hours in the open before even being permitted to use the latrines. Nobody knew how many Jews were being arrested; the number was high.

It was during the period after the pogrom that the story of the postal packages made its first appearance. It always seemed the ultimate of sophisticated torture. The front door

bell would ring. A woman who had been waiting for days or weeks for word from her husband would go to the door. There stood the postman with a small parcel:

“I have here the ashes of your husband. There’s five marks due for packing and postage.”

In the bleak, flat country just over the border in Poland, hundreds of Jews who had been thrown out of their homes that summer because they still had Polish passports, prepared to spend the winter in huts and disused warehouses. Nobody wanted them.

The line of visa applicants at the United States Consulate General swelled to hundreds, sometimes two or three thousand a day. Occasionally, it included a man with gray face and cropped head, who had been permitted to leave concentration camp because it was certain he now had a visa for emigration. Of course, he wouldn’t be able to take much with him, after deduction of the fine, and the refugee tax, and after forced liquidation of what he owned. And sometimes, it was said, pretty fat fees were paid for passports, or false ones. But at least he could get out.

Consuls Warner and Vollmer, who interviewed the applicants, could write an encyclopedia of misery.

I was glad my friends the Philippsohns were out and safe abroad. Philippsohn is not their name, but there may be a few relatives left in Germany. Their case is harder than some, and less hard than many. They got out, after all.

They were an old German Jewish family which had been in the country many centuries. During the war the father served with distinction and gained a rank few Jews ever got in the old Reich. He gave liberally to the war chest.

Postwar chaos and inflation hit the family hard. When I

first met them they were comfortable, but no longer rich. With the advent of Hitler the parents moved abroad, leaving a son and daughter to try to salvage something of their possessions.

Both had good jobs, and both lost them. What real estate the family still owned the Nazis reassessed so high that paying taxes on it was out of the question. Yet the authorities refused to permit them to turn it in to the city where they had lived on the grounds that it was not valuable enough to satisfy the tax claims based on it.

When their father died abroad, they renewed their request for passports denied to them for many months. They were told that one of them could get a passport on condition that he return to Germany and that their mother make over to the Reich the holdings she still had in France. They refused and were told that, if they wouldn't give in, both would be put into concentration camps.

They were lucky to find a way of escape from the country—eight hours ahead of the Gestapo.

Of course, as the son remarked later, if they had stayed on he certainly would have gotten first pick for sleeping space at Buchenwald.

The United States reacted to the new savagery by recalling Hugh Wilson, its ambassador in Berlin. The job of carrying on relations, such as they were, fell on the shoulders of the late Prentiss Gilbert, Councilor of Embassy, who had perfected his diplomatic footwork in the realms of brotherly love at Geneva.

Prentiss soon discovered that a full-dress disarmament conference was child's play beside the business of getting satisfaction from the Nazi government. Since 1933, relations be-

tween Nazi Germany and the United States had deteriorated from not-so-good to downright bad. Occasionally they became less bad, only because the Foreign Office and the Propaganda Ministry were too busy beating the drum against some other nation more immediately interesting to them.

At the moment when Prentiss took over, the field was unusually clear. The regime was not yet ready for the build-up which would precede the *coup de grâce* to Czechoslovakia. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harold Ickes, and Fiorello La Guardia achieved equal rank with Chamberlain and his umbrella and “the mad dog Churchill,” in the affections of party mud-slingers. For a while Ickes was even a short squawk in the lead, but in the long run he lost out to Churchill, as every other “well poisoner” always did sooner or later.

An ambassador has a tremendous advantage over a *chargé d'affaires*. As personal representative of the President, he can demand an audience with the foreign minister or the head of state. He can get through direct to the men who decide policy. A *chargé* cannot do this unless the parties of the second part are entirely willing. Prentiss found that it was impossible to see officially anyone with any real responsibility. Even his old personal friends in the Foreign Office were forced to find various excuses to put him off.

It was the sort of insulting Nazi boorishness which would have been amusing if it had not been so infuriating. Prentiss refused to let it bother him. Good-naturedly, he presented his series of protest notes, and made his representations, to whom-ever he could find in the Wilhelmstrasse. Often they went unanswered for weeks, or at the best were answered only through the D.N.B. news agency. Sometimes they were ignored.

Prentiss had one bit of reward for all the futile comings and

goings to the Wilhelmstrasse. It was a headline clipped from a paper in upstate New York, where he was born. It had originally appeared over a Berlin dispatch. It said:

“Local Boy Protests Again.”

The Germans had a very private art sale that fall and winter. No German could attend. It was just for tasteless foreigners who had foreign exchange with which they could pay for their purchases.

On sale was the collection of “degenerate art” which had been ripped out of museums throughout Germany as unfit for an Aryan people to look at, exhibited around the country as a horrid example of what art should not be, and now was to be disposed of, outside Germany, to the best possible advantage.

An artist becomes “degenerate” in Germany on any one of several counts, such as membership in any one of the more outlandish modern schools, or because of “liberalism,” “non-Aryanism,” or “political unreliability” of one tone or another.

The museums, particularly the progressive municipal galleries of western Germany, had been a rich hunting ground. Regardless of the extreme improbability that it might ever corrupt any good Aryan, a lot of the stuff was junk to the correspondents who looked it over. A lot of it was very beautiful indeed.

The collection included paintings, etchings, lithographs, pastels, wood carvings and sculpture by artists such as Barlach, Käthe Kollwitz, Georg Gross, Marc, Mataré, and scores of others. Some of the great French names were represented.

It was piled up in an old place on the edge of Berlin. You went in, pawed it over, toted up the asked price in marks converted into dollars, and carted it off. The Propaganda Ministry saw to it that you had permits to export it from the Reich.

German artists, meanwhile, were producing very colorful, very detailed works which, to best suit the Nazi taste, should deal with the lovely German countryside, or the German worker, or fauns (animal, not mythical) at play, or, best of all, the Aryan family.

The suggestion had even been made once, although I trust not widely followed, that family groups showing parents and children could well include certain neutral paint areas where the (no doubt) children to come could be painted in as the years passed.

CHAPTER 10

CHAMBERLAIN was a great statesman in the Berlin press in October, 1938. It was a good idea to play up the idea of lasting peace, after the strain the people had been under. The tight-rolled black umbrella had a rosy aura about it, and even the *Zwölf Uhr Blatt* found it no longer necessary to warn the British government to read its editorials.

Then Chamberlain made a speech in which he told Britain it should lose no time in rearming, and there was an incredulous injured howl throughout Berlin.

The spectacle of a lot of Nazis going all wide eyed and exclaiming, "Can it be that they don't believe us?" always delighted the foreign correspondents in Berlin. The funniest thing about it was that the rank and file really were incapable of comprehending that, just perhaps, people abroad might suspect Germany of breaking its word. The leadership put on the injured act automatically, for effect.

I traded beers in a *Kneipe* one night with a couple of Germans standing next to us at the bar. One of them was a Stormtrooper in uniform, who had just been on duty. The other was a clerk or small shopkeeper or something similar. Both were friendly, as most Germans invariably are, but both were bitter about foreign mistrust.

“If the Fuehrer says he’s for peace, why won’t people take it at its face value and be friends?” they asked.

I tried to explain to them that abroad people felt that Hitler would violate any agreement the moment it served his purpose to do so, just as he had in the past.

“But he’s not hurting England or France,” they said. “He’s just getting back for us the rights which were taken from us.”

I tried to point out that Hitler’s power politics to date, within the bounds of the expediency of the moment, had been frighteningly close to the line laid down in *Mein Kampf*, and that there were a few items in that program which certainly would touch France and England.

“But you must remember that *Mein Kampf* was a politician’s book. Those were talking points. The Fuehrer never would attempt to carry out all those things.”

There was much less of that sort of argument after the annexation of the remains of Czechoslovakia. Not even the Nazis could justify that as “unification of the German folk” or “a blow in the fight for equality.” That was about the time the Nazis gave up most pretenses. What justifying was done, for an invasion of Poland or a rape of Norway, was left chiefly to the Propaganda Ministry, which always has worked on the theory that if you make your claims fantastic enough you leave everyone too flabbergasted to retort.

The technique works beautifully, on occasion. And if your claim is astronomic enough, there’s always the chance that you can lead neutrals into assuming that the truth is halfway between you and the other fellow. Nazi propagandists are quite content with that.

The wheels started grinding again soon after Christmas.

As everyone concerned knew or suspected there was little hope for the “friendly collaboration” between Germany and

Czechoslovakia which had blossomed in the era of sweetness and light after Munich. The Germans got the right to build an *Autobahn* across Moravia and a deep canal connecting the Danube and their own Silesian waterways. Everyone was going to keep in the “closest cultural touch”—a phrase which had particular meaning to the Jews of Prague and the provinces.

Of course the Czechs by their very nature never could conceivably do anything quite to suit the Nazi taste. And as Hitler pointed out in a later speech, the Czech army was still nearly intact, and it still had remarkably fine equipment; and, although it never could have more than nuisance value if Germany became involved in war, it was better on the whole to wipe it out.

So the Slovak leaders in Bratislava were given the nod, and a howl for autonomy went up. The autonomy they were to get was hardly the sort that Slovaks had worked for in exile during the First World War or after the formation of Czechoslovakia. But it suited the German purpose very well.

It was inevitable that the Nazis would decide in Berlin that the Prague government was “incapable of coping with the disorders,” and that Czechoslovakia was a “source of trouble” which worked against the peace and tranquility of *Mittel-europa*.

The murder of Czechoslovakia is just a little red-inked stamp on page 19, with the date March 14, 1939 and the word *Prejezd*, which I guess must mean entry. There is no exit stamp because the German army marched in next day, and it took a military pass to leave Prague.

I reached the city in the late evening. All the way up from the German border there had been a tension around the dark little stations. There were a couple of Czech businessmen in

my compartment, returning from a trip to Berlin, and we talked spasmodically about what might be going to happen.

When I told them we had heard in Berlin that the Reich would march next morning, one shrugged and said:

“Well, we have expected it since Munich. Now we go underground again.”

He said he had worked in Bohemia throughout the World War for the secret Czech organization which helped overthrow the Hapsburgs.

The man who stamped my passport at the border had been in the Czech Legion, which had fought for Russia against the Austro-Hungarian Empire and had finally battled its way back from the middle of Asia when the Bolsheviki took control. We asked him if he knew anything definite. He could only tell us that there had been movements the other side of the border, and that planes had been flying along it most of the day.

There was little gaiety in Prague that night. In the streets people stood in crowds and a few hotheads made speeches. There had been one or two minor demonstrations. A small group bowed their heads at the grave of the Czech Unknown Soldier by the ancient City Hall, and the light of the flame rippled over their set faces. At the raucous Sekt Pavillon there were no tired businessmen to buy champagne for the hostesses. Everyone knew that President Hacha had been “invited” to Berlin, and waited hopelessly for the result. At that very moment he was being browbeaten into a state of collapse.

The lobby of the Hotel Ambassador was back in form. A lot of the old crowd had gone, but there was still the same babel of rumor and the same crush for the telephones. Nobody had much doubt that it was Czechoslovakia’s last night of liberty.

I was introduced to a young Englishman, who turned out to be an officer in the tank corps. He seemed pretty drunk and was most annoyed that his “central European vacation” had been interrupted. He stayed more or less drunk for most of the next week, and nobody could have been more open and above-board. When he finally left, he got some very useful plans and documents out with him, and he told me later in London that he had enjoyed his ride across Germany very much. He is now in the R.A.F.

I was awakened early next morning by a loudspeaker mounted in the Waclavske Namesti, which repeated over and over again a plea to all Czechs to be calm and accept the blow which had fallen during the night. It has been officially announced that Czechoslovakia had “requested” a protectorate and that German troops would march in at dawn.

Nobody knew then how the people would react. The army was still capable of bitter resistance. There were tremendous possibilities for riots and sabotage. The Czechs took the blow with a cold fatalism which was the product of centuries of strife, in which they had been more often dominated than free. It became fashionable for other small nations in Europe to face the threat of Nazi expansion with a half-frantic cry of, “We are not Czechs.” Let it be said that nobody who was in Prague when the Germans marched in thinks the Czechs are cowards.

There was a blinding snowstorm, and the taxi driver said driving would be impossible on the road to the border. Finally he admitted that he was afraid there might be fighting, and didn't want to lose his car. I showed him enough dollars to change his mind.

We met the Germans just across the frontier, at a bend in a village street. They were moving steadily through the snow, a light scouting force of fifty men or so on bicycles and motorcycles mounting machine guns, with one small car towing an antitank gun. They didn't stop in the villages as we trailed them in toward Prague. That was the job of the heavy units behind them. They were on the lookout for resistance, and they had been ordered to keep the road clear.

When we met them head on, the driver tried frantically to turn. It was too late. The unit began passing us. The officer in command leaned out over the side of the scout car. I thought he was going to ask for identification, but all he said was:

“From now on in this country you drive on the righthand side of the road.”

The occupation was as easy as that.

There are a lot of things which are vivid in mind from those days in Prague: the Jewish suicides; the look on the face of a German refugee when two of his former warders in concentration camp walked into the Ambassador; the arrests; the German officers gorging themselves on the good Czech food, and cleaning out the shelves of the bulging shops with their big wads of marks; the Czechs, who had eaten better than the Germans for years, ignoring the convoy of huge Nazi food kitchens which had rolled in filled to bursting with watery soup and propaganda. I remember the Czechs who stood silently at the grave of the Unknown Soldier and placed little bouquets there, and the German sentries who stood a decent distance away to give them privacy.

I remember sitting in the Embassy night club in the basement of the hotel, the second night of the occupation, singing *Tipperary* and *Madelon* and *Over There* and a dozen other

Allied war songs with a bunch of other foreign correspondents. The band played anything we wanted, and kept a straight face, and a couple of dozen German officers at other tables got more and more restless.

It was a futile and rather stupid gesture on our part; but, like sitting on the yellow benches marked "J" in the Berlin parks, it served as a safety valve.

Finally two officers a short distance away pounded for silence, and one of them came over and demanded that we stop "insulting the German Army." Later in the evening, when everyone was drinking pretty heavily, he drew me to one side and said, "You don't think we like this sort of thing too much, do you? For God's sake, let us try to make this occupation as decent as possible." (The army's part in the occupation *was* decent in every way. Of course, the Gestapo and the S.S. arrived later.)

I remember the long lines of flatcars waiting on railroad sidings, loaded with tanks and anti-aircraft guns and hundreds of heavy Skoda howitzers, all destined to strengthen the Germany Army.

I remember that Hitler came to Prague the first night, against the advice of his lieutenants, because he wanted "to be with my troops." But it was no triumphal entry in the Nazi grand manner. He slipped in unobtrusively and, except for a look out the palace window, never saw the town at all.

But the one scene which was most poignant was the entry of the first heavy German column into the Wacлавske Namesti in midmorning of March 15.

Dense snow slanted down over the great baroque buildings at the head of the plaza and over the big stores and the tramway lines where the cars stood deserted. It beat on the bared heads of thousands of Czechs who waited there for the

symbolic act which would destroy their freedom once again.

The crowd was jammed so close that it was almost impossible to move, and there was only one narrow lane down the center for the Germans to march in. The people stood in silence, and tears streamed down their faces.

Then a rumble grew down the side street, and the first German tanks and armored cars, their crews sitting tight-lipped with sub-machine guns at the ready, turned into the square. As they clattered across the pavement, a wave of sound swept with them and grew into a chorus of thousands of voices, as the Czechs sang their national anthem into the mouths of the German guns.

CHAPTER 11

THE SPRING and summer of 1939 cover a dozen pages of the passport with visas, money declarations, and border stamps. They represent a couple of months in England, and about the same length of time split between three trips to the Continent, including Poland, Germany, France, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia.

By the time the period started, Josef Beck had already been summoned to Berchtesgaden and told what Germany expected of Poland. Chamberlain, perhaps only halfheartedly, had recognized the bankruptcy of appeasement in his speech at Birmingham at the fag end of winter. The first muddle-headed feelers for an understanding with Russia had been put out by England and France, and the first cynical, cold-blooded preliminaries completed by Germany for the pact with Stalin.

The ingredients for the Second World War had been mixed. The few months left of peace were just a process of slow simmer.

No correspondent who has been trying to cover European politics over the past few years would claim omniscience for himself. The fact remains, however, that by May of 1939 it was obvious to virtually every American newspaperman in

Europe that nothing short of a miracle could halt the march into chaos. It was no longer a question of a trend which could be turned by political deals, but of a current which was deep and strong, and harder to stop with each day.

On the one side was German expansionism, which obviously must be halted if anyone else in Europe was to spend an easy moment. There was no longer any pretense about it. Hitler was no longer “unifying all Germans.” That cloak had been thrown aside the day he occupied Prague and conferred on several million people, who wanted to be anything but German, the blessings of life under the Gestapo. March 15, 1939, was the day on which National Socialism, which every party speaker had been careful to label “A pure German product—not for export” invaded the outside world. It was the day, according to a good many shrewd observers, when Hitler stopped looking on himself as the savior of Germany and began to visualize himself as a super Charlemagne, founder of a greater Holy Roman Empire, ruled by and for Germany.

Since that day the true Nazi idea has emerged clearer and clearer: a Europe—perhaps one day a world, in an economic if not a political sense—geared to produce raw materials for Germany and to consume the output of her industry; millions of admittedly inferior—by definition of *Mein Kampf* and every party orator—people of all nationalities, dedicated to a humble but helpful role, service to the superior, warrior, German race; Nazi *Kultur* effulgent over Europe, but restricted to the “Aryan” overlords who can appreciate it and denied to their servant peoples, who need only sufficient education to fit them for their jobs.

On the other side was Polish nationalism fortified by the support of the big western powers, where the people—regard-

less of their politicians—were beginning to realize that another retreat before Nazi threats meant ruination.

Poland knew that Hitler's demands, in effect, would turn her into a puppet state dependent economically and politically on Germany; the experience of Czechoslovakia told her what the next step would be after that. She did not realize how weak the democracies really were. She stood firm. England and France had no conception of the strength of the German military machine in relation to their own creaky arms; complacency made it easy to say, “Oh, we'll be able to beat them in the long run, if it comes to that.” So they stood firm. Hitler very probably did not want the Polish crisis to develop into a war. The longer he could lull the western powers into appeasement while he built up his own strength and harnessed more small nations to his wheel, the better position he was in. Perhaps he counted on another surrender in the face of the pact with Russia. But at any rate he was well aware of his military power and shrewdly suspected the moral and military weaknesses of his opponents. He knew that he would be more ruthless and quicker on his feet than they. So he stood firm.

He had committed himself, in the minds of the German people, to the re-winning of Danzig before snow should fly that year. He had to make good because dictatorships can't afford to back down. The two western democracies were at the end of the appeasement road because they never could have explained another fiasco to their people.

Probably only Hitler's death, and possibly not even that, could have averted war in 1939.

England in the summer of 1939 was like a customer who takes time to roll up his sleeves for a bar fight when the saloon-

keeper is already hefting the bung starter in his hand. Like the customer, she was still busy on the first sleeve when she was clouted on the head. Thanks to an extraordinary ability to take punishment, she has kept on her feet but, having lost the initiative, she still can't trade blow for blow.

Chamberlain succeeded that summer in putting through peacetime conscription, to the dismay of a great clamorous group which shouted about invasion of the rights of free Englishmen without ever stopping to think that failure to stop Hitler was the sure way to forfeit those rights. Some people seemed to think that by the mere act of Royal Assent to the conscription bill a huge army had been created overnight. Most others knew how long it would be before a trained fighting force, properly equipped, could ever be put into the field. They consoled themselves with the thought of the French Army and the Maginot Line. That marvelous French Army would hold the Germans off if need be until England was strong.

The Navy was unchallenged, and there were more and bigger ships on the ways. Certainly it would keep control of the seas and gradually throttle Germany as it had done twenty-five years before. Nobody then visualized, or could visualize, a German submarine fleet operating out of fifty harbors from Bordeaux to Bergen. It was unthinkable because France was France and the British Navy would protect the North, and that was that!

The air situation was a serious one, but nobody knew how serious. There was a tremendous fear of bombing, but everyone hoped the Germans would be too busy on the Continent to pay much attention to objectives farther afield. Meanwhile Britian would build an air force. Everyone realized vaguely that France's air force had rotted into old age, and that there

was no production worthy of the name. But France would soon remedy that.

Miles of trench shelters were dug in parks throughout England. Everyone joked about them and agreed that they would be pretty damp. Nobody conceived of raids which would last all night, every night, month in and month out, and send the whole nation to ground with darkness. A few million little corrugated iron doghouses called Anderson shelters were distributed free to poorer families. For months they could be seen by the hundred in the back yards along the railroad tracks, leaning unassembled against the fences. Some people did half bury them in the back yard and bank them with earth and rocks and plant flowers on them, and the papers appealed to the horticultural instinct of all true Britons with pictures of the best ones and captions which proved that “your Anderson can be a thing of beauty in your garden.”

Some people dug shelters of their own design, most of which immediately filled with water. Others did nothing whatever about it, serene that the government would take care of everything. The government, meanwhile, was “surveying facilities” or something similar. The Spanish war had taught that it takes thirty to thirty-five feet of earth, plus a heavy concrete roof to make a shelter *nearly* proof against a direct hit. Or the basement of a heavy modern building can be easily converted. Yet when the blitz hit London, one year after the start of war and twenty-three months after Munich, there was hardly a decent deep shelter available to the public, anywhere in town.

High quarters made it clear, meanwhile, in speeches to rural constituencies and cautious statements to Commons, that “everything possible” was being done to bring the nation’s armed might to a truly frightening peak and that a close watch

was being kept on all developments which might affect the peace of Europe.

There were all sorts of encouraging signs, none of them based on anything but the vaguest of information. In the pubs along Fleet Street, or out through the Home Counties around London where the civil servants live, you heard that British plane production was jumping by one or two hundred machines each month and that it would “soon” equal Germany’s. Of course, everyone said, other arms industries were keeping pace, and there “must” be tremendous quantities of guns and tanks and everything else pouring into the army. You heard that the French aircraft industry, which had been “ruined by those Popular Front people,” was building up its production sensationally. Of course, almost everyone neglected the fact that France was so hopelessly in the ruck, in quantity, design, and production facilities, that almost anything in the way of output of planes fit to take the air in modern war must be considered sensational.

You heard, periodically, that “considerable” progress was being made in those rather mysterious conversations in Moscow and, once or twice, that an agreement for the common defense of Poland was about to be signed. Almost everyone thought that agreement “will certainly make Hitler back down.” But then, almost everyone ignored the fact that, granting blind Polish mistrust of everything Russian and the holy fear of influential British politicians that contact with Communism might bring with it some foul moral contagion, agreement with Russia was next to impossible from the start.

Lots of facts were ignored in England during the summer of 1939. The cabinet ignored the fact that, whatever progress had been made in production, 1939 was a year for super, hundred per cent, all-out effort, to overcome the ghastly arms

deficit which had been inherited from the years of side-stepping and I-am-holier-than-thou-ism at Geneva. It ignored the fact that virtually every essential activity was being hamstrung by industrialists' bullneckedness, the reactionary deadwood of the civil service, or muddleheaded administration.

The one convincing excuse for the allied disaster at Munich would have been a concerted drive for material and moral rearmament in the year which intervened before the Dorniers swept down on Warsaw. It would have been proof of a grasp of what lay ahead, and of a play for time. It just wasn't there. England complacently went about "business as usual," or whatever it was called, that summer. It was such a pleasant way of living that she continued to follow it, more or less, until Dunkirk, which was almost the beginning of the end.

Of course there were a few strident voices which broke in from time to time on the pleasing spectacle of the world's greatest empire preparing itself step by ponderous step for the annihilation of another continental upstart. But they came from men like Winston Churchill, who had been warning England for years and who didn't ever seem to like what the government had done in foreign policy, and who some people thought was a traitor to his class and his party. Everyone agreed that if war came, "Winnie" would have to be given some sort of cabinet job because the man did have energy. But until that moment arrived, it seemed as if really he was making more noise than was called for.

The strident voices probably did a lot of good during the summer of 1939 because they were an irritant if nothing else. What was even more to the point was that someone in the Air Ministry had recognized the Hurricane and the Spit-

fire for what they were and had fought for them until they left the prototype stage and went onto the production line, thereby probably saving England from crashing with France.

The amazing part of that whole summer in England was how relatively unconfused the average Englishman remained. The “upper crust” either nursed its sneaking admiration for Hitler because he didn’t like those nasty Communists either, or clasped a hand around its brandy glass and cursed “that man” roundly for the inconvenience he would put the Empire to if it were forced to give him his come-uppance. The government plodded along in one general—very general—direction. The important papers went in all directions at once, appeasement, belligerency, and all the compass points in between. They ran the range from considerable clear thinking to a beautiful state of mind which simplified everything in a flash and produced a daily trumpet call of “There will be no war” for the edification of the subscriber.

The average Englishman reacted after his own fashion and without much regard for the official muddleheadedness or editorial hashish. He certainly didn’t realize how badly prepared he was going to be when war started, or how systematically prepared for everything the enemy was going to be. He trusted the government to look out for that part of it. He was pretty well convinced that war was going to come and looked on it as a disagreeable job which had to be done.

I knew one man who had served in the last war and who joined an antiaircraft unit soon after Munich. It meant sacrifice of two or three evenings a week, and a good many Sundays. At first the battery didn’t even have guns, but by the time war broke out it was well drilled and equipped. All its members were men who had given up spare time because they felt it was their job. I knew a younger man who

spent his two-week vacation in 1939 on a blue-mud bank at the mouth of the Thames Estuary, helping to man an observation and anti-aircraft post. He was a man who would have been unfit for active army duty.

Other people took first-aid courses or enrolled in A.R.P. units where they were instructed in preventive measures during air raids. There wasn't much fanfare to that part of the preparations because it was the part played out by ordinary Englishmen, who are not self-advertisers. Essentially it was the most important thing in the whole picture; the military preparations, such as they were, did not prevent the debacle in Flanders; the temper of the people, who looked on war as a dirty job to do, saved England.

On sunny Sundays, that summer, Virgil Pinkley and Ron McLellan and myself used to walk over the downs beyond Epsom, and through the old yew forest which flanks the Roman Road beyond Headley Heath. Inevitably we talked UP shop all day, and inevitably UP shop talk was war and little else. It was the same in the ancient inns along the route, like "The Cock" at Headley, where a ribald old parrot listens carefully to all debates and breaks in with an occasional "Silly old bugger." The people in the country inns and the city pubs which are England's neighborhood meeting places all accepted it as certain that war would come. They didn't like the idea, but there were no longer any jitters about it.

They weren't interested in all the arguments for a pact with Russia because Communism was the hope of the world, or against it because Communism was something too terrible to be spoken of in anything above a genteel whisper. They thought, most of them, that a pact with Russia would be a good thing because it would encircle Germany and make the coming conflict that much easier for all concerned. They

didn't very much like Nazi manners, but they had no particular hatred for Hitler—only a puzzled wonder that “the Jerries let him get away with all those things”—and they certainly never would have dreamed of fighting him if he had kept within the borders of the Reich. They would have much preferred to be left alone.

They certainly were not out to “save the small democracies of Europe” or any other democracies except their own. They did realize that unless they did something about Nazi expansionism, the Empire would be wrecked and their way of life with it.

If you play darts or shove ha'penny every so often in English pubs, you begin to know what Englishmen are thinking. They expand there and talk freely. The temper in England in the summer of 1939 was sober and quite clearheaded. It was also a little overconfident, but then that was the prevailing mood everywhere in the west, where the classic combination of British Navy and French Army looked unbeatable.

Everything else was normal. A huge concourse of old ladies in picture hats admired the blooms under the marquees at the Chelsea Flower Show. Blue Peter took the Derby as predicted, and most of the crowd like myself were too interested in pitching balls at cocoanuts, or in the digestible portions of cold meat pies, to know that the race had started, until a little line of colored caps bobbed down from Tottenham Corner over the heads packed along the rail, and it was almost over. Ascot and Cowes were a great success. So was Wimbledon, particularly for the American contingent which took home all the titles.

The King and Queen went to Canada and then the United States, and everyone sympathized with them for the heat

which the newspapers described, degree by degree, and the strange things like hot dogs which they took in stride. Everyone was hugely pleased at the obvious hit they made everywhere they went.

When the King and Queen returned to London, uniforms had grown much more numerous in the streets, and in particular there were many more men in the blue-gray of the RAF, which had never been very noticeable before. The shelter trenches in the parks were longer, and sandbagged gun positions had been prepared.

In the paint shop at the London Zoo there was a sign ready to be nailed to a tree. The sign was both a directive and a wry commentary on the Europe of 1939. It bore a large black arrow, and the caption read:

TO AIR RAID SHELTER. IN MONKEY HOUSE.

In Paris the summer sun slanted down through the thick foliage to lay a peaceful patina over the café terraces and the graceful streets. To a casual visitor everything was completely normal. "Les Guards" came over from London to march in the Bastille Day parade in emphasis of Franco-British solidarity and were cheered by the crowds only slightly less heartily than the Legion. There were a few heavy anti-aircraft guns mounted for propaganda purposes at the Invalides and elsewhere. But such things clashed only briefly with the feel of pleasant normalcy.

In the factories of the north and east, desperate efforts were being made to gear a rickety and torpid production machine to meet the emergency. In the Maginot Line the troops exercised with the guns, and supplies were piled up below the ground against the day when the enemy, if he

came, would waste himself against the steel-ribbed frontier hills. In Paris all that was hardly noticeable.

In the big cafés up on the Boule Mich' the correspondents sat around and talked war through the warm evenings. Everyone else talked war, too, but with a pleasant feeling of assurance that if Germany forced the issue she would surely be crushed by the classic combination of 1914–1918. Almost everyone was sure that the German morale after six years of National Socialism “couldn't” be so good as that of the western democracies—France, for instance.

Nobody liked the idea of air raids, of course, but it was comforting to think that you couldn't occupy a country from the air, and that the Maginot Line would prevent all land invasion.

There was uncertainty underneath, with those who had some inkling of how deficient the preparations had been. I was trying to sell the UP news service to French papers on the two or three trips I made to Paris that summer. Always I ran into the same negative. Nothing could be done while the international situation was so unclear. Yes, a neutral objective news report would be very valuable if war came, but one must wait to see how the war developed. One of the leading French editors came directly to the point:

“You've just come from Germany,” he said. “You know how completely they have concentrated on war. They have a fine, modern army, a vigorous leadership, and an air force stronger than all others put together. What can we offer? A fine, semi-modern army and impregnable forts, perhaps, but a political leadership which has been bankrupt morally for years. Our air force is in the suicide class, and the Germans know it. No, make no mistake, this war will be harder to win than the last one.”

The one most striking thing about Paris in 1939 was that, confident as he might be in the Army and the Maginot Line, the average Frenchman had no trust whatsoever in his government. In most cases he was cynically resigned to it. The attitude was to prove very, very important, later on, when the crisis came.

In eastern France, the coming war was already real. In Strasbourg things were at a standstill. The big stores placarded their windows with "People who Stop Buying are Traitors" in an effort to stimulate business. But the streets were semidead, and the whole atmosphere was one of resignation. Many people had already left town. The rest of the civilians would go immediately on the outbreak of war. The waitress in the old restaurant near the cathedral wall told me—in German, which she spoke better than French—that she didn't think she would like Brittany, or the Loire country, very much.

Behind and around the town, cut deep into the hills, lay the Maginot Line. A French officer who had dined too well on Pâté de Strasbourg and wine took me down into one small section, and then afterward we walked along the Rhine bank and looked over into Kehl, in Germany. On the German side big screens hid the work on the West Wall, and the clank of concrete mixers and heavy automatic diggers came across the strong current of the river. The Frenchman said it would take the Germans many years "to build anything as strong as ours."

Metz was like Strasbourg. Big, modern guns have a long range, and the town lay too close to them, and too vulnerable to the bombers. It was preparing for evacuation, also. Nobody even bothered with the business of improvising air-raid shel-

ters and digging slit trenches and filling sandbags, which occupied most of Europe that summer.

At Verdun people felt more secure. The line beyond would hold the Germans, and, anyway, Verdun had held out in the last war under the most devastating siege in history.

Halfway between Verdun and Reims, in the country where the old trenches still scar the earth and the war cemeteries crowd one on another, a World War tank, left there to thrill the tourists, lay rusting away beside the road. It was a cumbersome thing and must have amused the men in the cross-country monsters who swept down the road a year later.

In Belgium, people were realists. If war came, they would be invaded, probably by Germany. They had a good fortified line on the eastern frontier, and Liège and Namur would stand firm. The Ardennes had been made “almost impregnable.” But of course they would need help.

Meanwhile, it was better to be gay if you could, and enjoy the superb Brussels food, and stroll in the Bois under the soft afternoon sky.

In Holland, the army was trying out a new technique of wrapping the roadside trees with girdles of dynamite, to be exploded if an enemy came. There were little holes in the roads themselves, where mines could be laid. Canal bridges would be quickly dynamited. There was much talk of the classic defense of inundation.

But in the big mercantile cities, such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam, nobody believed war was coming, and everyone said that, if it did come, nobody would attack peaceful Hol-

land. Things would be, at the worst, just as they were in the last war.

A few Dutchmen admitted it was wishful thinking.

Poland in the summer of 1939 was preparing for war like a knight donning a white-plumed helmet to go out and smite the heathen. It was tragic for Poland that the heathen was equipped with swarms of fast planes and a crushing phalanx of tanks which mounted three-inch guns and others of the more modern weapons.

The war the average Pole was about to fight was a fine spectacular affair of big infantry masses and dashing cavalry and man-to-man combat. Poland had the men and the horses and the courage to fight. Unfortunately, she did not have the planes and tanks and artillery, and above all the anti-aircraft guns and the little, light, mobile antitank guns which spit out a half dozen 37-millimeter shells a minute and turn the inside of a tank into raw ruin. Apparently the Polish High Command, like others, had not been subscribing to the German illustrated weeklies, which would have told them all about the *Panzerdivision*.

Close to one gate of the Foreign Office in Warsaw, was scrawled in chalk:

"We want another Grunwald."

At Grunwald, in 1410, the Poles and Lithuanians had crushed the Order of Teutonic Knights, last great victory over the Germans in Poland's embattled history. The inscription was typical of the Warsaw atmosphere.

Taxi drivers talked of the "Battle of Berlin," which would inevitably come if Germany ever attacked. People laughed over an interchange credited to Marshal Smigly-Rydz and the German military attaché. The German was supposed to

have watched a Polish tank parade, then to have turned to the Marshal and asked, “How can you use tanks? You have no roads.”

“No, but you have,” replied the Marshal.

The Poles—that is, the city Poles—wanted to fight and were overwhelmingly confident they would win. They talked of the morale of the army and the courage and stamina of the hard-bitten soldiers. They said German mechanization would break down on the rutted roads. They said the Polish cavalry would play havoc with German troop columns. They said that Poland, with her sketchy communications and her lack of big targets, was ill-adapted for air attack. They said the Germans never could divert enough troops from the west to take all Poland.

The city Poles wanted to fight because they were fatalistic about Hitler’s demands. They knew he would not relax them. They knew that to yield, and to present Germany with Danzig and a free zone across the Corridor, would be the first step to economic dependence. Czechoslovakia had shown what came after that. A war was better. And the west would surely and devastatingly come, somehow, to Poland’s aid. Nobody wanted help from Russia, the ancient enemy.

In the countryside out to the west of Warsaw, around Lodz and off far to the southward, the grain stood high in the fields, and the harvest promised to be the best in years. The peasants said that such a harvest always came in the year of war. It had been the same in 1914.

Like peasants everywhere, they went on with their work through the long hot summer because they always had gone on with their work. And they knew that, when war came, they would be overrun by one army or the other.

There were a few sober men in Warsaw and the other

cities who knew and said that Poland would be defeated, smashingly defeated, if war came. They knew war should be avoided if possible, but they all felt that it could not be. Every Pole I talked to preferred going under to giving in.

In a night club in ancient Cracow, burial city of the Polish kings, I ran into a dozen or two young reserve officers who were off to join their regiments. Their names read like a list of the Polish nobility. All were in the cavalry.

I asked whether the cavalry was motorized. Even in England the old traditional regiments were being dismounted and put into tanks that summer. The officers were indignant. Certainly not. A gentleman's place was in the horse cavalry, and the horse cavalry would be the spearhead of Poland.

Three months later the horse cavalry was counterattacking the German panzer divisions gallantly and desperately, and in gory futility.

I had a week in Germany, the end of June. There was the same popular apathy toward the coming war. There was the same old fear of a combination too strong to be smashed. But the Nazis were betting on a collapse of the encirclement front, another capitulation by Chamberlain and Daladier, and occupation of Danzig by the end of August, “without firing a shot.”

It was useless to argue that the Poles were going to fight for their independence, and that popular feeling was going to force the west to join them. The average Nazi wouldn't believe it. The High Command was amply prepared for it. And the average German, of course, didn't count.

The day before I left Berlin, I had a long talk with one of the responsible editors of a big German paper. He was

what the Nazis call a *Volkspolitischer Mitarbeiter*, which might be translated “editor for race movements.”

“You’ve got this wrong if you look at it as an isolated crisis,” he said. “This is the culmination of a great racial surge which is bringing the Germans to the top as surely as the Romans and the British once were. This started with men like Scharnhorst and Frederick the Great. It continued to develop through Bismarck and von Moltke. It was set back once, in the last war. Now it has gathered such power that the German people must assert itself.”

I asked him what would happen if Germany were to be defeated again.

“That’s purely theoretical, because we are not likely to be,” he answered, “but that would never check the movement. In that case, we would try again.”

CHAPTER 12

THE FAC end of peace is on page 23 of the passport, a little stamp recording that the holder left Stockholm by plane on August 25, 1939. That was the day everyone thought the war would start.

The Polish visa is at the end of the accordion-pleated extension glued to page 7. It is stamped in at Gdynia, August 25, 1939. There is no outgoing stamp because three weeks and two days later the nation had crumbled and the government was over the border in Rumania.

About midnight on August 22, in the little village of Valsjöbyn in Jämtland, away up toward the Arctic Circle in Sweden, I had been handed a telegram which began:

HATE INTERRUPT VACATION BUT VIEW TODAYS DEVELOP-
MENTS ADVISABLE YOU GET WARSAW IMMEDIATELY

It was from the late Webb Miller, of the United Press. I had been enjoying a brief fishing trip, made even more perfect by the fact that there was only a sketchy telegraph service, and no newspapers whatever.

When I reached Östersund at two o'clock the next afternoon, I got a telephone call through to Webb in London and

discovered what the developments had been. Germany and Russia had announced their pact. If the ancient telephone hadn't been screwed to the wall, I'd have dropped it.

The lobby of the Grand Hotel in Stockholm, next morning, was a bedlam of rumor and confusion. Stockholm was becoming hour by hour the first great city of refuge of the Second World War. Diplomats' wives and children were arriving by every plane and boat, from Poland and the little Baltic states, even from Germany and the Balkans. Tourists all over Europe, finishing off their summer trips before the early September dash for home, had hopped trains for the north because Scandinavia was traditionally neutral.

Everyone wanted to cancel passages on the big German boats, or the *Queen Mary* or the *Normandie*, and transfer to the safety of Swedish and Norwegian ships. Poland was invaded at least three times that day, in the lobby of the Grand Hotel alone.

At the consulates, people demanded exact information on when the war would start, where it would start, and what the government intended to do in the matter of getting them home immediately. The Americans were arranging a big shipment of gasoline for the embassy in Berlin so that the diplomatic cars would be assured of at least enough to reach the borders, if wives and children had to leave.

In the mob in the hotel lobby a calm Mormon elder tried to help a covey of helpless elderly ladies just in from Moscow, Leningrad, and Helsinki. Six American girls from a junketing leg show told everyone how thrilled they were. The bolder spirits in the British and French contingents gobbled up the available airplane and steamship bookings for home, and hoped the planes would have passed Germany, or the boats the Kiel Canal, before war came. The others

plumped for Norway, where they could await developments. A half dozen fights flared up between family dogs which had been hurriedly evacuated from somewhere with the wives, children, and luggage.

At the Polish consulate the man who stamped my passport remarked that it was nice "somebody except Hitler" wanted to go to Warsaw.

I took plane to Copenhagen, picked up a flashlight, a big knapsack, and a few odds and ends, and cornered the last seat on the Polish plane to Warsaw. It was a Lockheed, of the type which soon became the Hudson bomber. We swept out over the Baltic, dropped at Gdynia, passed in sight of the towers of Danzig, and flew low over the Polish farm lands into Warsaw. Everyone in the plane had been looking back occasionally to see if there were any Messerschmitts around. Of course there were none. They did not come for another week.

Warsaw had not changed much since June. Nobody had any doubts about war now, and everyone was quite ready to face it. There was a bursting confidence in the Polish army and in the aid which Britain and France would give it. Of course, nobody, outside a few sober heads on the General Staff, or in the regiments already in position along the border, had any real conception of the thunderbolt which had been forged in Germany.

The army was something under half mobilized. They said in Warsaw that the western powers were urging Poland not to order full mobilization; it would be unwise to "provoke" Germany. The argument seemed a little beside the point in view of Germany's well-proved ability to do all necessary provoking herself.

At the military airdrome in Warsaw, squadrons of capable-

looking light bombers, and of fighters which were obviously too slow, were drawn up. Of course there weren't enough of them, and everyone knew it. But everyone said that Poland could never be crippled by air attack. It was too big, and there were too few concentrated targets.

Some people in the foreign embassies thought that Poland would compromise at the last moment, to avoid a conflict which must end in disaster. Perhaps the Foreign Office would have, if it had been given a last-minute chance. But compromise certainly was not the temper of the people.

The people of Warsaw went through the last week of peace with a stolidity which amazed every foreigner. It had been obvious for months, all over Europe, that the start of the Second World War would see none of the flag waving and flower pelting which had ushered in the First World War. But the crowds in the Warsaw streets showed no emotion whatever. I suppose it was fatalism. Certainly there was no fear about it. And no yearning for peace on Hitler's terms.

There were still a few who talked about the battle of Berlin, late at night in a smoky wine cellar or under the trees in the warm evening at the old restaurant down the Vistula from the city. There were not nearly so many of those as there had been. A lot of the cockiness of the summer had gone. Most people looked for a long, hard campaign, but pressure on Germany in the west would enable Poland to fight on. There were only a very few, and they not in public, who said it was doubtful that resistance could last over a couple of months.

Wladyslaw Besterman, the permanent UP man in Warsaw, was frank in his worries.

“Make no mistake about it,” he told me my first night in town. “Poland is going to fight if she has to. No government

could possibly give in to Hitler. But make no mistake, either. We are going to need every last ounce of pressure that Britain and France can bring to bear. They must be ready to attack. They must come in at once; and, when they do come in, they must hit Germany hard in the west. A modern war machine is a luxury. It is a super luxury for a poor nation like Poland. The Spanish war showed that. We have been spendthrift, for our means, in creating ours. But alone, it cannot possibly halt the Germans."

At the office of *Wieczor Warszawski*, Editor Strzetelski asked earnestly, "Do they know in the west how quickly and how hard they must attack? We can do our part with help, but there must be two fronts."

In the parks and squares of Warsaw volunteers dug crooked slit trenches where those caught in the streets could dive for shelter in air raids. In a few buildings, basements or ground-floor rooms were equipped after a fashion as shelters. Gas masks were being handed out to the limit of the supply, and some people began carrying them in the streets. There was a leaflet distributed on conduct during air raids. Wagon and carriage drivers were warned to turn their horses around in the traces, when the alarm sounded, so that they could not run away.

Nobody had a tin hat, which is a much more important item of air-raid costume than gas masks are. There was no well-organized A.R.P. service to fight fires, to rescue people trapped in ruins, or to care for thousands of wounded. Probably it was quite natural because air raids in those days were just a bogey to be written about in military journals, and nobody really knew what they were like. I couldn't help remembering, though, that for five years the Germans had been

preparing shelters and training civilian damage and rescue crews.

Everyone at the Europeiski Hotel, where most of the correspondents stayed, talked learnedly, and without much real experience, about how solid the walls were and how safe it would be in a raid. Privately, most of us wondered just how much punishment the walls could take.

The Europeiski was another one of those crisis hotels, with the usual frantic telephone switchboard, browbeaten porters, and table-top tacticians. There was a Swede who could tell you just how far Russia would let Germany advance into Poland before she junked the new pact and swept into battle. There was a Frenchman who had it all worked out how Allied bombers would fly to Berlin, drop their loads, and continue on into Poland to refuel and remunition, thus inaugurating a sort of pyrotechnical shuttle service to the dismay of the German High Command. Everyone had several maps and a whole set of well-established ideas on the campaign.

At the American Embassy everything was ready for a possible evacuation with the government. Ambassador and Mrs. Biddle had already sent many belongings to south Poland for safekeeping. They refrained from sending more because it would have looked panicky—a friendly gesture which they must have regretted later on, when shells destroyed the old palace where they lived.

There was gasoline buried in the embassy garden for the cars, and food and medical equipment stored waiting. Consul General John Davis and C. Burke Elbrick, third secretary at the embassy, were arranging for a sort of evacuation center near Brest Litovsk, to the east, where Americans were to

gather if necessary, and where a consul would see to it that they reached the Latvian border.

Potentially, the embassy might have had over 20,000 Americans on its hands. Nobody knew how many people there were in Poland who, because they had been born in America or for some other reason, might lay claim to a passport and to protection. At the best, there would be several hundred to advise and help; the thought of what the problem might become was appalling.

Most of the embassy and consulate wives had already gone. The last were Mrs. Elbrick and Mrs. Cramp, who started for Riga one night on a train jammed to the roof with evacuéés and their luggage. As the train pulled out, Bill Cramp turned to me and said:

"We will now man the walls, and await the enemy."

Bill had been secretary of legation at Addis Ababa when Haile Selassie fled before the Italians and the town seethed with riot for days. Bill's preparations for siege were unvarying. He held that any man could outlast any crisis, provided there were enough canned beans, a case of whisky, and cigarettes to see him through. We saw to it that his apartment was stocked.

A Polish policeman thought the case of whisky was dynamite and wanted to confiscate it as we carried it upstairs. Bill tried to look thirsty in English, French, and German. Finally we convinced the policeman. The siege could start.

I never got a chance at the whisky because when the war began everyone was much too busy. And a little over a week from that night I was groping my way down a dusty Polish road, looking for the evacuated government. I hope the whisky consoled Bill during the siege, which he sat out in the embassy.

The week wore on toward September 1, and everyone clung to the radio for the broadcasts from abroad. Britain and France were mobilizing on land and sea. From Germany came no mobilization news, but looking back, it seemed years since Germany really had been on anything but a war footing.

Supply trains wound through the Warsaw streets toward the west. In the shops, reserve officers in new uniforms made last-minute purchases before hurrying off to their regiments. Diplomatic cars queued up at the Foreign Office.

The days were bone dry, one after the other, and the nights clear. Everyone hoped it would start raining before the invasion came, for mud would halt the tanks, perhaps.

The last day of August, mobilization was decreed, and crowds bunched up around the posters. The mobilization never was completed, of course. Probably if it had been ordered a week earlier, Hitler would have struck at once. So perhaps it made little difference.

Ed Allen, a Londoner who had covered the Spanish Civil War in Madrid for the UP, arrived in Warsaw that night, on the last plane. As he unpacked, we talked about war coverage and about getting to the front to see something of the fighting. At dinner someone had a straight tip that the war would start next morning.

Everyone at the table laughed. Setting dates for “Hitler’s next move” had been a favorite sport in Europe for years.

For once, the date was right.

The Little Man’s war began early on September 1, when the Luftwaffe fanned out from Pomerania, and Silesia, and East Prussia, blasting a half dozen cities and systematically wiping out one communications line after another. It was

obvious from the start that this was to be the war of the little man because he would be shocked and battered by it almost as fiercely as the soldier in the line.

In the past the little man had usually escaped the wars. Unless he was pressed into the army, or unless the battles rolled over his farm or his town, he often saw nothing of them at all. Even during the First World War the real battle zone had been not much over fifty miles deep. In this war the battlefield was to be five miles high, and hundreds of miles deep and long. Everyone was to be a part of it.

Starting that day in Warsaw, the little men of Poland began proving what the little men of London and Coventry and Southampton showed the whole world a year later: that the average human being can stand up and take punishment the mere thought of which would have turned his blood cold an hour before.

Warsaw had gone to bed for what promised to be just another crisis night. When it awoke, a half dozen cities already had been bombed; the sirens were rising and falling with the capital's first air-raid alarm, as reconnaissance planes came in from the west.

Besterman telephoned early, with what little news there was: damage from bombs was reported heavy in Cracow and other parts of the west, the Germans were across the border in force at several points. I got through to the UP office in Amsterdam by phone. They had little information to add.

The "all clear" sounded. The planes had not reached the capital, or had not tried to. The streets began filling with early workers.

I was on the wire to Amsterdam again at 9:00 A. M. when

the first raid struck Warsaw. As the sirens swelled, it suddenly occurred to me that the line might be passing right across Germany, still uncut. It didn't sound like a radio telephone connection. I supposed the Gestapo was using up another dictaphone record on the conversation.

It was a morning of hazy, glary overcast. There was no sign of the planes, themselves, but the bark of antiaircraft in the distance gradually moved closer, and then little puffs from the shellbursts, showing against the white cloud layer, began marching across the sky. Occasionally, from somewhere on the perimeter of the city, came a sound different from the sharp A.A. fire, a sort of heavy *c-r-r-r-rumph*. It was the first bombs on Warsaw. First they came singly. Then there was a stick of five or six. Gradually they stopped, and the only sound was the guns. Smoke rose from some hit out in the west.

My window looked out over the Pilsudski Square, toward the Foreign Office. As I stood there dictating to Amsterdam, the square had emptied. A peasant in for market dutifully turned his horse around in the traces, dumped an armful of hay in the road for feed, methodically put on his coat and hat and made for the nearest doorway. Buses and cars stopped, and the occupants piled out and took shelter. Pedestrians scattered. People in the buildings along the square shut their windows hurriedly; for some reason they were told to shut windows during raids in Warsaw, although a shut window will inevitably shatter if a bomb falls close, while an open one may not.

The gunfire gradually moved off again toward the west, and stopped. Then came the “all clear” again. The peasant came out, took off his coat and folded it carefully away un-

der the wagon seat, turned his horse around, and drove off. The buses filled. The pedestrians started hurrying on to work. It had been a light raid.

I congratulated myself as I put the phone down that we still had telephone connections abroad. Then the phone rang, and the girl at the switchboard informed me that no more calls for foreign countries would be accepted, and none from abroad allowed. Except for one or two freaks of luck, none were.

It was hard to believe that war had started, after that mild first raid. The streets refilled. A few more people carried gas masks. The air-raid wardens left their arm bands on as they went back to work in the stores and offices. There were a lot of military cars in the streets. A group in the hotel lobby talked about what England and France would do. In the cafés, coffee drinkers bought up the extra editions and traded rumors about damage in the west and the number of Germans already shot down. Somebody said that the Polish cavalry had crossed the East Prussian and Silesian borders, and at the Foreign Office an official said he understood it was true. But most people just went on with their work, as small men usually do.

Nobody waved the flag, nobody made speeches on street corners. In the district of the old ghetto, men in little black caps and tight-buttoned gabardine coats came out of the tenement warrens and opened up their dingy shops. Along the Marshalkowska, the fashionable dress salons and banks and car showrooms pulled up shutters and unlocked doors. At the station there were more trains running than usual, filled with men on the way to their regiments or with families moving to the country. Automobiles and streetcars and wagons and carriages got into the usual traffic jams in the

streets. Work continued on a couple of big buildings under construction, and men on high scaffolds continued to give the hotel a fresh coat of paint.

Warsaw was taking the start of the war with the same stolidity and the same fatalism she had shown in the summer months of tension.

The sky cleared by midafternoon to a deep blue, with occasional high-piled banks of cloud—perfect bombing weather, with high visibility and sufficient cover for the planes. It was the sort of day Nazis had come to call “Hitler weather” because the sun always seemed to shine for big party mass meetings.

I was at the American Embassy when the Germans came again, and we saw them for the first time. They came on the usual wave of siren shrieks and the bark and thud of guns. There must have been sixty of them, and they looked very beautiful as the sun silvered them against the blue. The high little puffs of A.A. bursts showed white around them.

As we watched from doors and windows, the formation broke up, and the machines swung singly or in twos in great circles over the city. Three or four Polish pursuit planes chased hopefully after the fast medium bombers; the Germans seemed contemptuous of them and of the A.A. bursts, which looked very accurate. But then, A.A. fire is deceptive; and, when a plane is as high as the Germans were, a burst seemingly close alongside may be hundreds of feet above or below. We didn't realize it at the time, but the pursuit planes chasing the Germans across the sky were the last we were to see of the Polish Air Force in action.

Occasional heavy, muffled *c-r-r-umphs* sounded from across the river, but the planes over the center of Warsaw did nothing but circle. It seemed strange that they dropped no bombs,

and then someone realized that the pilots were there, that afternoon, to photograph and to fix their objectives in mind. Later, they would be back.

There were seven air alarms before dark. The people were curious rather than frightened. They stood in doorways to watch the show, and went inside only when forced by the wardens.

Shortly before dark, the Germans disappeared for the night, and in the courtyard of the Europeiski were lighted a few well-shaded lamps and everyone ate as usual in the peaceful summer air. It was strange, looking back, that there had been no more excitement to the first day of a war.

Nobody knew anything definite about the situation at the front. People were much more interested, in fact, in what was happening in London and Paris. Several times in the course of the evening someone asked, "Haven't Britain and France declared war yet?"

I began to realize how desperately Poland was counting on quick, decisive aid.

Correspondents who gathered that night in a smoky, upstairs room at the Foreign Office for the daily press conference soon discovered that covering a war in Poland was going to be like doing a blow-by-blow prize fight description from the last row of the bleachers.

Nothing had been organized. Most of the correspondents spoke French or German or English. The conference was invariably held in Polish, which almost no one understood. There was nothing to do but sit patiently for a half hour or so, doodling on a piece of paper, and then try to find someone on the Foreign Office staff who had listened to the an-

nouncements and could translate them after a fashion from memory.

There was no formal contact with the General Staff or any other army organ. It was impossible to find out whether correspondents would be permitted, eventually, to go to the front. It was impossible, in fact, to find out where the front was.

Some of us talked for a while of striking out for the west and taking our chances of finding the army. But there were no cars available, none of us had papers valid beyond the limits of Warsaw, and none of the Americans or English could speak a word of Polish.

My own best language was German, which of course was worse than useless once the war started. Sonia Tomara, of the New York *Herald Tribune*, spoke fluent Russian and could make her way about without much difficulty. Without Sonia's Russian the pea-soup fog would have been complete.

We consoled ourselves with the hope that something would be done for the press as soon as things “settled down.”

The second day of the war was a repetition of the first. There were seven alarms again, and the same distant concussions. But the city was completely calm.

Throughout the country, the Luftwaffe was ranging over every crossroad and every rail line in advance of the German army. We didn't know it in Warsaw, but a slow paralysis was sweeping in from the west and north, and the campaign was already lost because the waves of bombers were systematically destroying every means of gathering the forces to fight it.

A dozen cities were bombed. Czestochowa, out in the

western border region, was in flames. The authorities put the toll of dead and wounded civilians at fifteen hundred for the day. Warsaw thought itself lucky that the bombers kept to the outskirts.

Everyone was talking about the Polish garrison at the Westerplatte, in Danzig harbor, which was holding out under a trip-hammer barrage from the air and sea, and throwing back wave after wave of attackers. People called it the "Polish Alcazar."

It was pleasanter to think about the Westerplatte than about what was going on elsewhere. In the west there was a tremendous German push developing toward Katowice and Czestochowa. There was no stopping the crushing overweight in tanks, artillery, and planes. In the Corridor the fast mechanized columns were cutting through the flat country, and a big Polish army was already in the first stages of encirclement. In the south, mountain troops had penetrated to Zakopane, and would soon menace Cracow. In the north, one of the East Prussian columns had carried through to the junction of the Vistula and the Ossa. Another force had almost reached the west bank of the Vistula near Bydgoszcz, cutting the Corridor. There was some talk of a Polish counter-attack, there. There were always stories of counterattacks which were about to develop.

The first "atrocities propaganda" stories began to make their appearance. Foreign Office people talked about poisoned chocolates which had been scattered from German planes for Polish children to pick up. There were tales of small balloons found here and there, which contained some sort of poisonous gas.

What was really going on was bad enough, without all the improbable fairy tales. A direct hit did a very messy job on

a home for feeble-minded Jewish children, not far from Warsaw. Blocks of poor dwellings in crowded western cities were being gutted. The advance out of Silesia and Pomerania and East Prussia was inevitably wrecking 30,000,000 lives.

The first of the refugees began streaming in out of the west that night, in automobiles and peasant wagons and groaning trains. They were leaving Lodz and Poznań, and the little market towns and the big country estates because they knew much better than anyone in Warsaw how far the Germans had gotten and how fast they were moving.

“If it would only rain,” everyone said, “the mud would stop the tanks.”

It remained bone dry. *Hitler Wetter.*

“Are England and France going to sell us out, too?” everyone asked. The British newscasts, which everyone tried to pick up that night, were not enlightening.

The third day, the bombers were over early, and the anti-aircraft fire seemed much stronger when they came. It was Sunday, and the churches were packed.

Mr. and Mrs. Biddle and several others had spent the night in a small villa outside town. Near by were a dozen other villas, and a small tile factory.

What induced the Heinkel to come that way, early on a Sunday morning, is not clear. Perhaps the tile factory looked like heavy industry to the pilot. Perhaps he was getting low on gas, and wanted to turn for home.

He let go his whole stick of bombs, then roared away low toward the west.

The Biddles were lucky. They got no direct hits. But the bombs were close. They blasted in the windows. They interrupted the ambassadorial shave. They rudely shattered

the meditations of Okay, Mrs. Biddle's great dane, who was taking his morning constitutional in the garden. A couple of near misses were time bombs.

When the Biddles got back to Warsaw, the bombing was already public property. To the average Pole, it was a fine gesture of solidarity by the American Ambassador, to get himself bombed so early in the game. A crowd stormed the courtyard of the embassy, cheering everyone in sight, the Biddles, the embassy staff, the embassy chauffeurs and the newspaper correspondents, who had been miles away when it all happened. They even cheered Okay, who still looked very doubtful about this business of being a hero.

But everyone was cheering that day, anyway. Close on the heels of that first bombardment, the British radio flashed the news that Britain was at war. France was to follow suit in the afternoon.

I was at the Foreign Office when the news came. Someone burst into the room with it, then dashed off to tell others. The official I was talking to broke down and cried.

"It has been quite a strain, this waiting," he said.

The rest of the town broke down, too. In a half hour the population was in the streets. There was no mistaking the emotion. It was relief, that Poland did have friends and that no last-minute formula would now be scratched together to keep appeasement alive at the price of Polish independence.

The people who had gone stoically through three months of growing crisis and the start of a major war gave way for the first time. They danced and sang in the streets, and finally surged out through the business section to the British Embassy. For blocks around, the streets were one cheering mass.

At the British passport office somebody hauled an old pump organ out onto the balcony and played Polish and British songs. The crowd recognized *Tipperary*, and bel-
lowed approval. Then they rushed across the street to the American Embassy, cheering Mr. Biddle, the President, the army and the navy in rotation.

The declaration of war meant immediate help. That was enough for the moment. Nobody could have told you how the help would arrive. But Poland was not alone. Soon Germany would be caught between two fires, and the fleets of bombers would do to Berlin and Essen and Düsseldorf what the Luftwaffe was doing to Poland.

I found Major W. F. Colbern, the American military attaché, in his upstairs office at the embassy, and asked him how the British and French could help.

“They must draw the pressure from here,” he said. “They must strike in the west with everything they’ve got, and force the Germans to pull back their tanks and planes. But they must strike now.”

It was already apparent, by then, that the situation of the Polish armies in the west was desperate. They had massed too close to the frontier, which in itself was one great salient, instead of fighting a holding action and making their serious stand back along the Vistula, which could be defended. Behind them was chaos. Refugees clogged the roads. Men called to the colors tried vainly to reach their mobilization points. And from dawn to dark each day, the Luftwaffe smashed at all lines of communication, gradually chewing them to bits.

All news from the front was bad. The Corridor was definitely cut. Czestochowa had fallen, and the pincers were reaching out to Katowice and its heavy industry. The Poles

were holding at Mława, north of Warsaw, but a German column had reached the railroad to the southeast, and was flanking them.

The refugees still poured in, and now there was the first trickle out, by the faltering trains which ran off to Vilna and the Baltic states, and the long, bone-dry roads leading south toward Lwów and east to Brest Litovsk. Mława is only sixty miles from Warsaw.

Taxis vanished from the streets. The drivers had been hired for the long trip to the south or were saving their gasoline to evacuate themselves when the time came. Correspondents were reduced to horse-drawn hacks for transport, and they chased the news in feverish dignity, howling in ten languages at the drivers to get a little speed out of their nags.

A censorship had been established without warning, and it was one of those blind affairs under which no notification of cuts is ever given. All copy was filed at the central post office, to be transmitted by radio at the pleasure of the authorities. Nobody ever knew what happened to it after that.

If a message was massacred, nothing could be done about it. If it was lost, there was no way of checking up. The radio station was so clogged that messages began taking anything up to thirty-six hours in transmission. Nobody attempted to send anything ordinary rate; everything was urgent. I broke into a cold sweat, that night, when I counted up the United Press news file for the day and discovered that it had cost something like \$1,000 to get it from Warsaw to Amsterdam and New York.

“The withdrawal from Silesia and from Poznań has begun, and is being carried out with great tactical brilliance. Polish

strategy, as shown last in the Bolshevik War of 1920, has always laid great emphasis on withdrawal and counter-maneuver, which creates a war of movement and not a positional war. This is ideally suited to the structure of the Polish Army.” This was a commentary which had been given me by a Polish General Staff officer. No one realized, then, how the panzer divisions thrive on wars of movement.

Of course, Polish strategy by that time was a hit-or-miss, grab-as-you-can sort of thing. The German army, in a series of great, scythe-like sweeps from north and west, was crushing resistance like a boxer beating an opponent down with a series of right and left hooks to the body.

Huge masses of Poles were being encircled, battering themselves against the tough German steel in an effort to break through toward the east and join the withdrawal to Warsaw. The Polish infantry fought with a cold bravery which the Germans freely acknowledged. The cavalry, traditional spearhead of the “war of movement,” charged into the tanks which someone in Warsaw before the war had claimed were papier-mâché. The handful of antitank guns fired until their barrels were red hot, then were overrun. The artillery was dive-bombed wherever it unlimbered.

Parachutists dropped behind the Poles either had knowledge in advance, or soon got fifth-column information, of targets which could be destroyed. These were not the clouds of parachutists used later against Holland and Belgium. They were saboteurs pure and simple, and sometimes they were very effective.

It was “war of movement,” without a doubt. But the Polish “war of movement” was of light cavalry and tough infantry which could cover great distances in a day, under their own power. The German was powered by heavy diesels, double-

bank radials, and the sleek in-line engines of the fighting planes, and it moved at anywhere from 35 to 350 miles an hour.

So the Poles fell back, over parched plains which suffocated them in dry dust and which made the advance just so much easier for the German tanks. In Silesia they had been hammered from the start by the panzer spearhead, by heavy artillery, and by air attack which seemed to swell with each wave of Heinkels and Dorniers and Junkers dive bombers which swept out of the west. The province was as good as lost. In the Corridor, the full pressure had been on since the day before; the troops not already cut off in the north, around Gdynia and Danzig and the Hel peninsula, were reeling back toward Warsaw.

The Luftwaffe attacked Warsaw in force that fourth afternoon. They blasted the Skoda motor factory at the airport, and a great, thick column of black smoke stood as a beacon for the next waves which came to complete the job. They shattered an airplane factory, and scored repeated hits on the Polski Fiat automobile plant, in Praga across the river.

They also got a direct hit on a welfare station run by a group of girls at the Warsaw East Station. A fully marked hospital train standing in the station at the time escaped unhit.

They hit a workers' settlement apartment in Praga, killed a good many noncombatants, and set several blocks of tenements alight, a quarter mile or so behind the Central Station.

I went down to the last section because the great plume of smoke looked nearest and because there wasn't even a horse hack available that afternoon. And I saw my first Eu-

ropeans reacting to the horrible shock of bombardment from the air.

The area where the bombs had fallen was dingy and mean. There were one or two small garages, a stable for heavy draft horses, a few dozen cheap shops. The dwelling houses looked dark and unsanitary. Several of the shops had been knocked flat; a garage was blazing fiercely; smoke poured out of several tenements. There were a couple of big craters in the streets, and everything was littered with glass and splintered wood and bits of masonry.

The alarm was still on. In one archway which looked little safer than the open street, forty or fifty people waited. Through a doorway which gave into a tiny cubicle of a bedroom, we could see the wife of the concierge crouched on a puff-quilted old bed, praying under a little Ikon in the angle of the wall. The people in the arch didn't seem frightened. They seemed just not aware.

The rest of the district were in the streets. Whole families were hurrying off with whatever they could scrape together, going anywhere so long as it was far from this spot where death had struck. I remember one group, father and mother and two big children, all burdened with bedding and clothes in great bundles, and one small girl behind them with a big canary cage. From the way she carried it, it was obviously all she cared about. She hadn't noticed that the canary was dead in the bottom of the cage.

Hundreds of people helped the two or three inadequate pump combines which were fighting the fires. There were improvised bucket brigades, and squads which chopped at roofs to get at the fires. There were stretcher parties which used doors that the blast had ripped from their hinges. A couple of nurses and a doctor worked in a shop whose front

had been blown away, bandaging the slight wounds and giving morphia for the worst. Then an ambulance drove up, with the glass crunching under its tires, and took the most serious casualties away.

Several older men began leading the draft horses out of the stable because the fire from the garage had begun to make the roof smoke. Some of the horses were so frightened they had to be blindfolded. One had a great hole in its shoulder, and you could watch the shoulder bone move up and down in the wound as it walked off.

A few people were pulling at a big cascade of debris which half blocked one street. While I watched, they pulled out one figure which moved faintly, and two which did not move. The first person must have died soon after because when I passed again all three were covered with one old horse blanket.

Warsaw had no real A.R.P. services. Its fire department was inadequate by far for the emergencies of the air blitz. There wasn't enough anti-aircraft protection. The people never had the lift which comes from seeing "some of ours" drop from the clouds onto the backs of the bombers and shoot them down.

But the people did not give way to panic. They fought back however they could, and improvised where it was possible, and found some means of existing. I began to realize how hard the common man can fight in a war which strikes at his own home and his own inconsequential livelihood.

September 5. A notation in the diary which I was going to keep throughout the war—it was abandoned a week later in Bucharest—reads:

"The Germans are at Plonsk, 60 kilometers to the north

on the river, and at Serock, 30 kilometers away at the confluence of the Bug. Everyone expects a big battle somewhere before Warsaw, but is a bit dismayed at the speed of the German advance. It must be stated, however, that the Polish withdrawal was made under orders, that it has never assumed the proportions of a rout, and that the army is still virtually intact. We wish we knew more of what is happening. . . .”

“It must be stated . . .” I often wonder now who passed that sentence on to me. Correspondents are not always unbelievers.

Of course, nobody knew what was happening. Out at the front, generals were doing cross-country hops by plane over the line of the German advance because the Stukas had smashed all normal communications and the army signal corps was overwhelmed, with everything else, by the incredible speed of the great tank advance.

“Has never assumed the proportions of a rout . . .”

That was true. The Poles—the foot soldiers and gunners—were fighting with a bravery which has never been surpassed. They were holding out long after the great arms of steel had swept past them and the heavy German infantry was moving into position around them to pound them to death with its cannon of Krupp and Skoda and Rheinmetall-Borsig. They even tried to fight their way back to re-form with the rest of the army.

You don't do that against panzer divisions unless you have your own tanks and artillery and the planes to back them up and can seize local superiority where you attack. You are overrun.

We didn't know it then, but a new conception of war, all-out war, was being dashed into a test tube which already

held 30,000,000 human beings and the old, carefree way of life.

On the basis of the test, someone in Berlin would order so many more thousand of this, perhaps cancel production of that. The previously untried tanks would go into full production at Fallersleben, where the People's Car was to have rolled off the lines, and at scores of other factories. The Stukas, which many high German officers had opposed when the idea of a dive bomber had been taken over from America, would be hailed as the war's unstoppable weapon—as they were until ground troops learned to hold their machine-gun fire, and until the Spitfires and Hurricanes took the sky in force.

Probably we couldn't possibly have grasped the picture from Warsaw, even those of us who had seen the German army maneuver and who knew what a war machine was being created deep in the Reich. I doubt if a single correspondent in Warsaw had ever heard of Charles de Gaulle, whose book on modern war had been very carefully studied in Berlin and copiously commented on in *Die Wehrmacht*.

“Still virtually intact . . .” That's one of those official communique phrases which goes with “retired according to plan” and “took up prearranged positions.”

The Poles were up against something which no nation on earth, in September, 1939, could hope to beat. They were unfortunate in being the first, and in being crushed the more completely because of it.

CHAPTER 13

THE PEOPLE of Warsaw knew the Germans were close, and thousands of citizens worked day and night at barricades to the west, north, and south. What they did not know, the morning of September 5, was that the government was already in flight.

The first crumbling had started sometime in the late night hours. By daybreak, great packing cases were piled high in the courtyard of the Foreign Office. I could find nobody I ever recalled seeing before. Finally I got through by phone to one official of the press section. Yes, he had been detained at home. No, there was no evacuation. Yes, of course everyone would be in the office later. Yes, certainly, correspondents would be duly notified if the government left town, and would get transportation. There probably would be a special train, that is, there would be if evacuation were necessary.

The diplomatic corps had been given a rendezvous at Nalechow, not far from Lublin, in central Poland. It followed the government as a matter of course, but in some cases with a speed which was phenomenal.

The American Embassy, be it said, departed in good order

at about noon, in a compact caravan which included one big army truck of supplies, food, medicine, and fuel, which had long been ready for an emergency. Landreth Harrison, second secretary, stayed behind to gather up loose ends. Burke Elbrick was coming back next day to help him.

The consulate general under John Davis stayed as a matter of course. Within the space of an hour or so it had had dumped in its lap the job of representing both Great Britain and France, of protecting their civilian nationals fleeing toward Warsaw from the west for official shelter. Americans began bringing in what luggage they could carry.

Scores of people, Poles and foreigners, even a few of the less provident diplomats, begged the embassy staff for the residue gasoline buried in the garden. A little was given them, but the bulk of it had to be saved for a final emergency.

By midafternoon, Poles with an inside track of one sort or another were getting out of town. They went in peasant carts, in taxis, in ancient droshkies, in cars and trains which were jammed to suffocation. They went anywhere, except west.

Besterman, his wife, his small son, his mother, his brother, and his sister-in-law crowded somehow into a tiny Polski Fiat which would have been uncomfortable for four. They left everything at their flat in Alleja Szucha.

"Why do the Germans make war on Alleja Szucha?" asked the boy.

My friend Biega, of *Wieczor Warszawski*, was off at the front in uniform. His wife waited behind for him. Perhaps they are together in Warsaw. Nobody has heard of them since.

Gradually word spread throughout the city that the government had gone without telling the people why, or

where, and without giving them any hope. There was the first sign of uncertainty—not real panic—but for the most part the men and women kept going, tending their shops, or pulling down the shutters to go out to the suburbs and fill sandbags.

“These people don’t deserve that sort of treatment from their government,” said Alex Small of the *Chicago Tribune*.

The newspaper correspondents were confronted with a problem which has since become very familiar. They could stay in Warsaw, which would certainly soon be stormed or besieged. There they probably would have no communications. Or they could follow the government, to “cover Polish resistance” or perhaps even to “go to the front.”

There was no question of remaining, for correspondents whose nations were at war. The British newspapermen left in a party which Sefton Delmer, of the *Daily Express*, eventually led through to Rumania, with his customary aplomb. Ed Allen, also British, was to leave next morning.

If the Americans had known of the coming siege of Warsaw, and of how close the field campaign was to its sorry climax, they probably would have stayed. As it was, three of us made what we thought was the best possible arrangement—Dick Mowrer of the *Chicago Daily News*, Lloyd Lehrbas of Associated Press, and I.

Red Colbern, the military attaché, had also stayed behind. We planned to remain in Warsaw until the last possible moment, then to bolt out the back door and make contact with the government and the staff, somewhere to the south. He had room for us in his car. We would stay with him and leave when he did.

The Germans were over in force the afternoon of the fifth. It was one of those perfect bomber days, clear, but with big banks of cloud to dodge into. Not that the Germans dodged: they flew what then seemed high, somewhere around twelve thousand feet, paying little attention to the antiaircraft fire, methodically picking out what they wanted, and going for it. There were big smoke columns in the distance, but no way of getting to them and nobody to tell us what had been hit. The center of town was not touched.

Then I saw my first Stuka in action. One minute it was glistening in the sun at the edge of a big cloud bank. The next it turned tail to the sun and dropped steep for the earth. I thought it had been hit. Suddenly it pulled out; as it rocketed back toward the clouds, a great burst of smoke belched out below it, where the bomb had hit.

There were six—no, eight—more behind it, slanting down at five-second intervals at some target along the river. They ran into a cross fire from three or four machine guns, a weird pattern of red direction shots, one in five, which seemed to move very deliberately across the blue sky toward the planes.

The third in line came out of its dive, reached four or five thousand feet, and must have been hit direct in the cockpit. It seemed to shudder in air, then it turned nose down again and went straight for the ground. There was no smoke. It might have been another bombing dive, except that the plane vanished behind the roofs and never came up.

A two-engined bomber, a Do 17, went down in flames. A third plane came down across the river in a shallow dive. It seemed to be trying to crash-land, but the pilot must have forgotten to jettison the bombs because there was a great *c-r-r-rumph* when it had passed from sight.

Without much hope that the message ever would get

through, I sat down to describe what it feels like to see the destruction of a plane aiming at you and your city—a city becomes yours when you’ve been bombed in it. For good luck, I sent off the fourth cryptic wire about the flight of the government.

One of the four got through. It was the one which had seemed least plausible in the writing, as it turned out.

The hotel was a strange place that night. There were a dozen cases of advanced jitters, largely the result of alcohol. Most of the guests were packed. Once in a while someone started for the station where a train was supposed to be leaving for the east. Invariably he came back with news that there was no sign of it.

Someone mentioned the first leaflet raids on Germany.

“Nice, but ineffective from our point of view,” said a Pole.

We all argued that of course it took time to mount a big offensive. The French Army would attack soon, and the Siegfried Line was not yet complete.

I spent the night in Larry Lehrbas’ apartment, a legacy from a departed diplomat. We both had knapsacks packed, in case of emergency. As we pried tuna fish out of a can, we talked about those green tomatoes pickled in garlic which you used to get in the Russian restaurants in Shanghai, and how they made you see your great aunt Esther all night.

Next morning the bombers were there early. They came sweeping over the center of town, and dove at the high bridges which crossed the Vistula. We stood on the balcony to watch them dive and, just as each plane pulled out, we could see one big long shape, and a smaller one to each side, start plunging to earth.

They didn’t hit any bridges that day. A direct hit de-

molished a wooden boathouse close under the shore end of one. Great spouts of water shot from the placid river. There were two or three columns of smoke.

But they must have been very respectable bombs. The nearest bridge was four hundred yards or so away. Yet the wide panes of the windows seemed to balloon toward us, then snap back into hard glass. None of them broke. The floor bucked. The big standard typewriter on which I tried to write a cable danced once or twice on its rubber feet.

It was my first real experience with close, heavy bombing. The only time I had ever had the same helpless feeling was during a mild earthquake in Tokyo.

We filed a lot of copy, without very much hope that it would get through (most of it never did). Then we went over to the embassy. It was fortunate we did because Red Colbern had gotten his orders to leave and would start in midafternoon.

I took my two suitcases to the embassy and left them with Bill Cramp, who promised to protect them against the entire Wehrmacht.

"Come back after the war, kick my body off them, and take them away," Bill said.

The embassy was already crowded with people who thought diplomatic walls might be safer than civilian if the Germans really began bombarding the city. There were a few Englishmen and Frenchmen, who had nobody else to turn to.

A dozen at a time were demanding transportation, or gasoline for their cars. There was a Polish-American who had arrived a few weeks before to present to the government forty-eight flags on behalf of the forty-eight states, as a sign of solidarity. He was the only really cheerful man in the place.

Allen, Alex Small, Bob Neville of *Time*, and John Warner of the *Herald Tribune* inherited an automobile which had died in front of the embassy and had been deserted by some Polish officials. It was theirs until they found the government, if they could get it started.

That was easy. A filling station somewhere in Warsaw had been blending its gasoline with water. We drained the car, and the cache in the embassy garden did the rest.

The car loaded, Red led his cavalcade out of town, over the smoldering boathouse, out across the bridge, and through semideserted streets with a few rough barricades. Gradually more cars filtered in from the bigger turnings, the cobblestones became an asphalt, then a dirt road, and we were refugees.

It was the first great refugee army of the Second World War. It came from Lodz and Poznań and Katowice and Cracow, from the neat little towns of the Corridor and over the rutted roads which connect the Polish farming villages.

Instinctively the homeless had gone to Warsaw, which funneled them out over the bridges toward the south and east. Some were in peasant carts or on bicycles. Some were in cars. Many had been sleeping in the ditches for nights, up from Poznań, through Warsaw and out again. You could tell them from the clean ones who had slept the night before in their own Warsaw beds, and were just starting out.

You can't picture a refugee road until you've groped through the dust of one. Even a straight, black French road has its dust. On a Polish road jammed with refugees the dust was an opaque tunnel which stretched out across the country, with the roadside trees moving backward past you

on the right and left, and a confused pattern of shapes keeping pace with the car ahead and behind.

With a good car, we threaded our way up through the column, ducking back into line when a dispatch rider, or once a motorized field gun battery, came honking away up from the south. Several times we passed long convoys of trucks filled with infantry.

When we slowed down, we caught the details of a farm cart full of baggage, the dust lying thick on the labels from Cannes or Davos or Zakopane; or of a car with a baby carriage lashed to the roof and two bicycles tied over the spare tire.

Everyone—the small shopkeepers or mechanics, the rich men with their chauffeurs, the women in shawls and the women in mink coats—had great shapeless bundles of last-minute baggage, or bird cages or mantelpiece clocks or favorite chairs. Whoever had a dog, seemed to have brought him along.

Everyone had the fixed look which is the look of a life gone smash. Some stared out at the fields or at the woods where reserve troops lay safe from observation. Some watched above them for the German planes, which were often in sight, and almost always audible. Most of them just stared down the road.

If your car runs dry in a refugee column, you leave it and start walking with what you can carry. If the peasant driving your cart decides he has gone far enough, and turns back home, you walk or you buy his horse and his long narrow hay wagon. Those who walk get a lift sooner or later because people in the refugee stream are very kind on the whole. At night you sleep in a barn or a field, or just keep pushing down the road.

We were lucky that afternoon. We covered something under 100 miles in something over seven hours, despite one or two false turnings. None of the planes we saw machine-gunned or bombed the road. We had sandwiches and something to drink, and a few lemons to suck, to cut the dust out of the throat.

Just after 11 P. M. we came down a long dirt hill into Nalechow. The government had gone, or what of it had been there in the first place. It had gone late that afternoon, off toward the east. After it started the diplomats. It had all happened because of a very small thing.

Mike, Mr. Biddle's chauffeur, had a deep and abiding passion for the radio in the big limousine. When the Biddles had settled down in a vacant villa, Mike drifted inevitably back to the car. He switched on the set.

The announcer at Radio Breslau, in German Silesia, was remarking that the Oberkommando knew perfectly well where the Foreign Office and the diplomats had gone, that in fact the ambassador of a certain neutral North American power was in a certain house in Nalechow, and that in due course the Luftwaffe would be paying Nalechow a visit. Word came that one German column was not very far away across the Vistula. On a few minutes notice, the exodus began.

By the time we arrived, Nalechow's single gasoline pump was bone dry. A peasant cart had just dragged its way in from Lublin, with two full barrels of gasoline and a hand pump. A dozen diplomatic automobiles, big official limousines and low-powered private sport cars, were maneuvering for position at the pump, backing and filling, bumping one another. The language indicated that protocol had vanished.

The American contingent had long since moved off on its

own gasoline. Burke Elbrick had stayed behind in case any American stragglers came in. He said the embassy was headed for Krzemieniec, close against the Russian border to the southeast.

Gradually the cars filled up and went off into the pitch-black night.

"We fill up these gas tanks. Then we sleep. Right here," Red Colbern decided.

We even found beds, in a house which seemed empty but for whispered voices from upstairs. I had thoughtfully packed pajamas at the top of my knapsack, but there were no blankets on the bed. I pulled down a cretonne curtain from the window, and rolled up in that.

Nalechow by daylight was very peaceful and very down-at-the-heel. It was a minor summer resort, with the usual villas and *Kurpark*. A few swans swam in the pond, and late summer flowers were blooming in the weedy borders. There was a pavilion near the pond which an American girl told us about—an American girl married to a Polish officer who had been somewhere around Gdynia when the war started. She was waiting for him to turn up.

At the pavilion we found ham and eggs and coffee, which is rare good luck in any war. We had more coffee, and some strong cheese.

That was when I became a diamond smuggler.

A well-dressed woman came across the park. She asked us in good English whether we were going to Rumania. It brought us up with a start. We had been living for three or four days in an atmosphere of growing defeat, without admitting it to ourselves.

"Hungary would do just as well," the lady said.

I told her we might eventually cross the border, but that it was very indefinite.

“It will be before I cross it,” she said. “I’m staying here. I can’t go.” Her husband was fighting somewhere up north, too. A month earlier she had been visiting the World’s Fair in New York with her small son.

“Would one of you take a button for me to the French consul in Bucharest?” she asked. She was wearing a blue and white printed silk dress, with big three-quarter-inch buttons covered in the same material. I said I would take the button.

She cut one from the dress. Then she said: “I should tell you. It’s a diamond. It’s worth \$20,000. I want the consul to send it to my sister in Paris. It will be safe there.”

I told her I couldn’t take the responsibility. I started thinking of strict wartime searches at the border. I had never been in Rumania, but somehow or other the idea of a Rumanian jail was not very appealing.

“There’s no responsibility,” she said. “I am quite willing to trust you. You see, there is a chance this way, that it will get to Paris. Otherwise, the Germans will take it. They are very close, you know.”

I took the button, and tucked it into the inside pocket of my wallet, behind the “scram money” in dollar bills, and the extra dozen passport pictures, and the old membership card which I had carried ever since I left the Senate press gallery in Washington.

For three days I kept feeling whether it was there. Nothing romantic happened. Nobody ever asked to examine the wallet. By the time I reached Bucharest I had forgotten I had it. One night at Ferdinand Jahn’s home I remembered it and cut away the cloth. The stone was blue, intricately cut, and flawless.

Even its end was unromantic. I carried it up two flights of crooked back stairs at the French Embassy and gave it to M. Choppin de Janvry, with the address of the sister in Paris. He pulled out an envelope, put the stone in, sealed it, and tossed it into the safe on the wall.

"It will leave with the pouch next week," he said.

He was very matter-of-fact about it, and I thought he was the sort of dull French bureaucrat who would take custody of such a stone without asking for its story. I was wrong.

He had enough imagination, nine months later when France fell, to strike out for the Near East and make his way 20,000 miles to London, to join de Gaulle.

As we left Nalechow, we passed the gasoline pump again. The emergency barrels were empty and the place deserted except for a Scandinavian diplomat who had just found his way into town. He had enough gas left to reach Lublin. We showed him the road.

The dirt road wound up out of the valley and across rolling farm land. It was almost deserted, but once we passed a top-heavy peasant wagon in which three nuns with huge, clean white coifs perched placidly on a great pile of miscellaneous convent furnishings.

A small British staff car appeared in front and waved us to a halt. The man in the back seat had a fierce fighting face and wore a patch over one eye. He was General Carton de Wiart, one-eyed, one-armed, and one-legged and all the tougher for it, who had lived for years deep in eastern Poland and had come out to head the British military mission.

The General was on his way to Nalechow to find the Polish government. Red climbed from the car and told him that the town was deserted, that everyone had fled to the east.

“Good God,” said the General.

His driver turned the car around and shot back toward Lublin. The next time I recall seeing his name, Rommel had captured him in Libya.

Lublin had been a dusty market town, whose only claim to fame lay in its position on the pitted “express” road which joined Warsaw and Lwów. The day we arrived, it was the end station for tens of thousands who had streamed in from north and west.

There were men trying to join the colors, who had been shunted for a week from one mobilizing center to another, always with the promise that “you’ll get a uniform and a gun there.” There were dozens of worn-out cars, and hundreds with bone-dry tanks. Baggage was piled in the streets, and the cafés were jammed with coffee drinkers, and others who just sat at the tables and were too tired to order. We found a place with one bottle of beer left. A Pole who had worked in Buffalo overheard us talking. He told us that Besterman and his family had left an hour earlier, after a fancy bit of finagling which had earned them a full gasoline tank.

Then the siren went. Lublin had had one or two raids, but everyone seemed more interested than frightened. Of course, that was a year before the Battle of Britain, and the Luftwaffe was not using those waves of fifty or seventy-five planes, and you could stand out in the street in a town which was being bombed and take an academic interest in the display.

The planes did not appear overhead, although we thought we heard distant machine-gun fire. Everyone went back to discussing the news. Our friend from Buffalo had heard it on the radio.

The French had launched a general offensive. The Sieg-

fried Line had been pierced in five places, and the French were actually across the Rhine somewhere around Strasbourg. Stuttgart and Freiburg and Karlsruhe had been evacuated. The British Home Fleet was shelling Hamburg. A force of 500 Polish bombers had been over Berlin, “and maybe there isn’t any Berlin.”

I thought of the distance from the mouth of the Elbe to Hamburg, and remembered that no fleet could storm the river against an air force which certainly had not sent all its planes to Poland. Certainly there had been no 500 Polish bombers over Berlin. Maybe a few. Or maybe the British and French had that many, and had begun fighting in earnest.

The Siegfried Line broken in five places. It sounded like a big order. But then, the Siegfried Line was not yet completed, and the French Army was the best in the world, and longing to carry a war once more into Germany.

Red had to drop us in Lublin. He had found at last where the Polish General Staff had gone, and was off to join it. This was definitely no time to arrive at the door with three foreign correspondents. But before he left, he got us a car.

It was very simple, for someone who knew how. We went to the *gendarmerie*. We saw three very polite and considerably harassed officers who had spent all morning saying “no” to people, and who were delighted to say a tentative “yes.” They got us to a fourth officer, a small, round man with big glasses, who was even more polite. Red showed his papers, and talked very convincingly in bad Polish.

The small man stamped a few papers and led us out into the street. There his politeness vanished. The first car which came along he stopped on sheer lung power. The car was headed north, but it made little difference. It was, he stated,

to deliver three eminent foreign correspondents to the best hotel in Lwów, where they would of course find food, shelter, and instantaneous connection with the outside world for all the news they wanted to send.

Programmatically, the setup was perfect. We had a few thousand words apiece to get off our chests. Then we would find the government or the army, and get some more copy.

In practice, things worked a little differently. The car was a small, open, canary and green D.K.W. The D.K.W. is a car made to accommodate four rather undersized Germans for a relatively short distance over a very good road. Nothing more unsuited to the requirements of the moment could be imagined.

The owners, two brothers in their 'teens, who explained wistfully that their Packard had been requisitioned, suggested that we really needed something more elegant, and that they continue on north after all. By that time the small officer had politely disappeared, and we assured them that their car would do nicely for the one hundred or more miles to Lwów.

Reluctantly, they flourished one of the officer's papers at a gasoline pump. It produced a full tank, plus a little extra for a spare tin. We piled in.

Into the space ordained to be filled by four undersized Germans piled two normal Poles, two normal Americans, and myself who, alas, was oversize. Also stowed away, to an extent on the floor but in general on available knee space, were three knapsacks, a suitcase, three portable typewriters, four gas masks, a spare tire, four bottles of beer, one of vodka, a big package of sandwiches, and a large bag of overripe pears, which Dick Mowrer had scrounged somewhere in a back street. When the stowage was complete, none of the

passengers could move; the car, with a burst which on future performance was totally beyond its powers, managed to make off down the cobbled street.

It was powered with a death rattle. It had been on blocks for two years, and the tires had been worn to the fiber long before that. The motor failed five times in one hundred miles, and there were three blowouts, the last of them providentially near a garage which had one undersized tire and tube left in stock.

After the first three motor failures, Larry and I started discussing how far we were going to have to walk to Lwów, and whether it wouldn't be better to throw the typewriters into the ditch when we abandoned the car. The big bag of pears turned up between me and the side of the car, ground into a wet mass. Dick sensibly, and with regrettable disregard for our problems, dozed off.

Fortunately, the road was clear. It was reserved for military traffic, and we relied on a little piece of red paper and our Foreign Office passes to get us through. The car might die by the roadside, but there was nothing else to hold us up.

Unfortunately, there was a slight complication; neither of the Polish boys spoke any foreign language but German. Both Larry and I speak it, but somehow or other, it didn't seem exactly the diplomatic tongue to use in the present state of affairs. The boys assured us that they had nothing against speaking German, a fact which became all too evident a few miles down the road.

We had explained to them carefully that it might be all right to talk freely on the open road, but that it might not be too easy to convince a spy-conscious sentry, if he overheard us. The boys promised to be careful.

At the first road block south of Lublin we showed our papers. The driver talked for a minute or two with the pair of soldiers who guarded it, then turned to me and said in German:

“He says to watch out for planes over the road.”

Two bolts shot home on the sentries’ rifles. Larry was already flourishing the Foreign Office pass, and Dick was repeating hopefully: “Amerikanski, Amerikanski.”

We got out of that one, all right, and out of a half dozen similar bloomers. It got so that Larry kept his passport ready at all times. Argument did no good. Outside the fact that they were being taken a hundred miles out of their course for the convenience of three foreign correspondents, the boys had not been touched by war. Over the entire distance to Lwów, they never grasped the danger of talking German.

At the town where we found the new tire, we ate a quick meal of cold sour-cream soup, bread, and cheese. The smoky café was full of officers, and the Allied success rumors we had heard in Lublin had been five times magnified. Someone told us America was ready to declare war over the *Athenia*, and the waitress said that twenty-five German submarines had already been sunk.

We were not far out of town, when we saw the column of smoke. It was dim and distant at first, in the sunset light. Gradually it grew in height; and, as the sky darkened, it became pink, then a flickering red. Sometimes there seemed to be a fountain of sparks. A fire engine from somewhere to the north passed us at top speed. We thought we heard some planes in the far distance.

The fire must have been thirty miles away when we first sighted it, because we did not reach it until pitch dark, and

even the D.K.W. was doing about twenty-five miles an hour on that particular stretch. The countryside had been so peaceful all that afternoon, away from the refugee army, that we had thought it must be a normal sort of fire. We realized it wasn't when we saw the people coming toward us.

These people were moving north, toward the danger area, because their one thought was to get away from Tomashev Lubelski before the Germans came again. They were moving in the usual dreary procession of slab-sided carts, old cars, wheelbarrows, and bicycles, looking for a haymow or a friend's house or a sheltered spot under a hedge. Anywhere that was not in Tomashev Lubelski.

Behind them, the column of flame-shot smoke towered a thousand or more feet into the sky.

Tomashev Lubelski was a small town, the sort of town the tourists who shot down the long, dusty road in peacetime summers, to Lwów and Sinaia and the Black Sea resorts, would have passed by with hardly a notice. It was a place of a few hundred buildings and a few thousand inhabitants. There was a massive, whitewashed church which looked Russian; a few respectable buildings for the government, the police, and the telephone exchange; and there was block after block of little one-story shops where the Jewish merchants sold cheap shoes from Czechoslovakia, print cotton goods from the British midlands, flimsy Japanese export wares, pots, pans, and pictures of the saints—all the marketplace claptrap of a thousand mass-work industries.

People had been bartering in the market at Tomashev Lubelski since the Middle Ages, disturbed now and then during a war when the armies overran the town and stripped the market stalls, but going on again when the armies had passed. The old armies, usually, had left the town relatively

intact, and soon the farmers had come in again with produce and changed it for what they wanted.

It would be a long time before that was possible, now. The Germans had chosen market time that afternoon for their attack. They had come over low, nine planes strong, and had crossed and recrossed the town, bombing as they went.

They must have been small bombs because I saw no craters worthy of the name, but then, the houses in Tomashev Lubelski were very small houses, and they were admirably adequate for the job. They killed the local doctor, and thirty-five or more others. Nobody knows today, probably, what the exact figure is, or how many were wounded. At any rate, it was not a big death roll. Tomashev Lubelski was important to me only because in seeing it with the fires still spreading I saw in its essence the misery which Nazi *Kultur* was about to bring to Europe.

Be it said here that Tomashev Lubelski had no “military objectives.” There was no garrison beyond the usual rural *gendarmerie*. There was no railway junction, or big bridge. There was no factory to draw bombs, no workers’ settlement which could be razed on the excuse that morale would be shattered with it. There were no German troops anywhere near it, to provide the fiction that by bombing it the planes were demoralizing the enemy’s defense zone.

The road to Lwów passes through the center of town. To the left, as we entered, the white church walls glowed orange above the low, thick trees. That half of town had been little damaged. To the right, everything was fire.

The flames had already run across block after block, when we got there. Nothing was left except flattened, burning debris, and drifting smoke, and the ghosts of two hundred houses, their chimneys standing crookedly in long lines. The

fire had moved on to the next section, and was eating through two hundred more.

Tomashev Lubelski's fire reminded me irresistibly of the barn blazes we used to have in Stonington, Connecticut, when I was in the eighth grade of grammar school. In Stonington most of the town turned out for the fires, cheering the volunteer brigade as it stumbled to a halt and dropped the long white hand ropes to go back and unlimber the apparatus. If the fire was too much for the brigade, which it often was, the crowd helped with buckets. The process was not very efficient, looking back, but it was a great social occasion.

It was no social occasion in Tomashev Lubelski that night. There were two or three pumps from round about, and a few people from Warsaw who had been passing through and had stopped to help. The real fire fighters were plain ordinary shoemakers and shopkeepers, with teapots and wash basins and pails and chamber mugs, who dashed hopelessly to the stream or the blackened puddles in the road, then hopelessly back again to throw a few drops of water into the fires.

The whole business was even more futile than Stonington at its worst. You don't fight thermite and H.E. with buckets.

The flames drove on. We stood watching a woman who kept moaning “my house, my house,” and an old man who went back into the fire area to find something which seemed very important to him. One family had saved a big pile of furniture, and they shouted triumphantly at one another when someone came up with an old foot-pedal sewing machine. We watched one man run repeatedly into a small shop door, returning each time with an armful of empty paper shoe boxes. I suppose it was the urge to salvage something.

We drove southward out of the town, without having helped anyone. It was too early in the war, I guess, for a neutral correspondent to stop watching and start fighting back.

That was the evening of September 7, 1939. A year later to the day, the great London blitz began; that night, down in Mile End Road and the little East London streets which draw life from it, I learned that you fight the bombs together or give in to them alone.

The car gasped its way through the night into Lwów, up a series of long grades which seemed bound to kill it off. Finally we got into the built-up streets. We wanted the leading hotel, some hot food, and a telephone.

Neither of the boys knew Lwów. For a half hour we poked through the streets, taking the ones with streetcar tracks because they looked more important. Then we ran into a horse cab and paid him a wad of paper money to guide us to the hotel. The car had reached the point where it couldn't keep pace, and we followed the cab by the hoofbeats, most of the time.

There was no room at the hotel. People who had gotten in before us were bedding down in the lobby. There was no hot food. What was worse, there had been no telephone for two days, and the porter told us we might wait a week before we could get through to outside.

“You might take the train,” he said.

We asked him what train. It was the one which ran down through the Ukraine to Cernauti, just over the Rumanian border. It was to leave in a half hour. We were full of copy; particularly we were still full of Tomashev Lubelski. We decided on the train.

The porter found us a cab. The D.K.W. boys, with what seemed a certain relief, carefully said good-by in their best German and drove off to see whether our gasoline requisition slip would get them a full tank for the trip back north. The horse took us down a steep hill, and I remember that his hoofs struck little sparks from the rough paving. Occasionally we could make out the ragged silhouette of a bombed building off to the side.

The station was jammed with troops, refugees, and great cascades of baggage. We found that no tickets could be issued for the border unless the buyer had an exit visa. Finally, our Foreign Office passes with their broad red stripes got us through. Then we waited three hours and a half, on a black platform packed so solidly with people that almost the only thing to do was to lie against your knapsack and try to sleep.

Dick Mowrer infuriated Larry and myself by dozing off immediately. We got a perverse pleasure in waking him up each time a train whistled in the yards. Each time it was a false alarm, and each time Dick went back to sleep. Finally, when the sky was growing light and people were beginning to wonder when the planes would come again, the train arrived.

We had first-class tickets, on the theory that there might be a little more room. As it turned out, we had a compartment to ourselves; the other refugees carefully stuffed themselves into third class and made no attempt to storm the precincts of the rich.

A half hour later, in broad daylight, the train pulled out. We all went to sleep.

When I awakened, the land was rolling and open and golden, and big pumpkins were lying in the sloping fields

between the rows of corn stubble. The houses in the villages were washed in pale colors. The train ambled along in Indian-summer mood.

Then we stopped at a junction town. Down the track was a big siding and a roundhouse. At that moment the alarm sounded, lifting and falling. We could hear the planes, then we caught sight of them—nine two-motored bombers, flying like geese, but much lower.

The platforms cleared. The train started up with a clash, and we congratulated ourselves that we were to be pulled clear of the obvious target. At the roundhouse we stopped. Someone dove behind the engine, and a moment later it started again and headed for the country, leaving us. On the next track was a line of tank cars. On the other side was the roundhouse. We began to consider a quick move.

Then Larry noticed that the planes had already crossed the line of the track and were still going north. The engine came back, coupled on, and we started off again for the border of Rumania.

CHAPTER 14

THE FIRST bit of comic relief to World War II is on one of the telescopic additions to page 27. The visa for Rumania had been issued in Warsaw August 30, 1939, and is stamped into the country on September 8, at a place whose name I can't possibly remember.

On the station platform just beyond the border were a few peasants in remarkably white costumes, one of them was using his right foot to scratch his left calf. There were great piles of baggage. There was a man in gray flannels and a tweed coat who stood with his hands in his pockets and shouted, "Are there any British subjects on the train?"

Two small, dark men who had a dozen or two words of English between them swarmed up to him, finally convinced him that, somehow or other, they did have British passports, and were shepherded inside. When the man came back, we told him we were Americans, and hungry.

He seemed quite relieved to hear reasonably coherent English. "You can't get off the train," he said, "but I'll see to it that some food gets to you." That brought us to the not-so-idiot boy.

The boy had thick black bangs which touched his eyebrows, and his mouth hung open. His coat bore the remains

of a generation or so of platform snacks. He spoke something in the nature of German, and informed us that the sandwiches on his tray were all ham. We bought them.

Then he said, “I got cheap *lei*.”

The *lei* is more a national sport than a currency. At the time of our arrival, it rated at 146 to the dollar, for those who cared to change their dollars at a bank. The boy offered us 400, and assured us it was the best rate to be obtained north of Bucharest. We changed ten dollars or so apiece. Then it developed that he was really not-so-idiot.

The passport butcher came along, complete with rubber stamp and ink pad. He duly noted the date of entry, noted our foreign currency on the passport margin, and turned to go. Then he wheeled.

“I got cheap *lei*,” he said.

His price was 425 to the dollar. He was indignant that we had taken anything less. He assured us his was the best price north of Bucharest. We changed ten dollars more apiece. Again he turned to go. Again he wheeled.

“Border people will want bank vouchers for all foreign money when you leave,” he said. “I think maybe I’d better change passports.” Carefully he scratched out the original notations, and made the necessary alterations.

The train ambled off, and in due course arrived at Cernauti. The porter of the hotel Schwarze Adler informed us in rough, East European German that the telephone connections were hours in coming through, so we caught the express for Bucharest.

It’s not clear quite how to start a description of the Bucharest of September, 1939. The station platforms themselves had an air of semi-placid hysteria. Everyone seemed to be scut-

ting, not in the manner of a man busy about some important, terribly private business, but of a water bug darting in five directions at once with no preference between them.

Eventually, if you stayed long enough in Bucharest, you discovered that the town had a definite “goofy” charm; once in a while the charm was ripped to shreds, and underneath it appeared the raw chaos which the Nazi advance guard was methodically creating.

The advance guard used the Athenée Palace Hotel as a chief base, jumbled together in five floors of complete confusion with foreign diplomats, British agents, newspaper correspondents, arms salesmen and con-men of all persuasions.

The Athenée Palace had two great attractions. In the first place, it was the most comfortable hotel east of Vienna. In the second place, almost everyone spied on almost everyone else. This was a source of awed fascination for the few simple souls who had nobody to shadow at all.

The three of us arrived in the clothes we had worn out of Warsaw, knapsacks on backs and typewriters in hand. We soaked off the dirt, had breakfast, and began phoning through copy to the cable-heads; the three suits were carted off to be sponged and pressed.

It's a great feeling to be unable to move. When the valet has your shoes for polishing and your suit for pressing, there's nothing much to do but luxuriate.

I had put in calls for the United Press offices in Rome and Amsterdam. As luck would have it, Rome came through first. I got halfway through the story of Tomashev Lubelski, and the man at the other end said:

“Look here, I think you really ought to send this through Amsterdam. Italy may not be in the war yet, but we're still

not sure just where we stand, and this isn't exactly Axis propaganda.”

I waited for Amsterdam, and dictated the story over a clear, quiet circuit. When I had finished, I suddenly realized that the line ran through Budapest, Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, Frankfurt-am-Main and Aachen, and that probably a half dozen wire-tappers had been listening in between the Hungarian and Dutch borders.

My suit came back, and I went downstairs. The first person I met was Edith von Kohler. Fräulein von Kohler (or is it Frau?) is a trim, youngish woman with beautiful blond hair. She is reputedly a cousin of Heinrich Himmler, a distinction which she does not parade in public. She is very charming.

When I first worked in Berlin, she used to appear once in a while at 4:00 P. M. press functions where bad tea and *ersatz* cocktails were poured out for the edification of foreign newspapermen. She worked for the Ministry of Agriculture. Then she disappeared into the Balkans. In Bucharest she was a newspaper “correspondent.”

Perhaps the suit still smelled of refugee, because she asked me if by chance I had just left Poland. She said we must talk about it sometime.

Near the door which leads from the lounge to the bar, were Herr and Frau Kirchholtes. He had been German Minister in Addis Ababa four years before. He said they were still on “temporary leave” from the German foreign service, and on a private tour of the Balkans.

Then I discovered such contacts made one suspect. An Englishman in the bar told me so, a slight man who had been on the train the night before.

“Be careful of those people, old man,” he said. “I don't know about the man and his wife, but the von Kohler woman

is the most dangerous agent in the Balkans." I told him they were all old friends, which seemed a source of some sorrow to him.

The bar was a sort of continuous performance farce, with a constantly changing cast which somehow never changed its character.

There were always a couple of earnest Germans at the bar, who ate plate after plate of potato chips with their beer. Usually there were a couple of men in gray flannels who ordered double gin and tonic. One of them was a long man who looked like a Texan, and who according to popular legend was in charge of the sabotage of the Iron Gate, where the Danube pours out of the hills onto the Rumanian plain, and the channel could be easily blocked.

There was always a table or two of Englishmen, perhaps one of Frenchmen, and a few Germans. Everyone eavesdropped. It got almost embarrassing for the Americans, who had no one they could legitimately skulk after. There were always a couple of gentlemen who had black-market connections, and pockets full of thousand-lei notes; unfortunately, the rate was low, because the headquarters of the black market turned out to have been Cernauti, after all. There was usually a large hulking Rumanian who was "about" to get a diplomatic post abroad; his program of the moment seemed to provide for nothing beyond periodic reconnaissance trips into the bar, and a series of long, mysterious conversations with a series of dark, furtive individuals, behind a certain fake marble pillar in the lounge.

The correspondents were all going back to Poland. That meant big preparation, because it was obvious they would have to be self-sufficient in food, transportation and fuel.

Maitland, of the *London Times*, and I decided to pool resources on a car, to be fitted with as many spare gasoline tanks as it would carry and a stock of canned stuff. We made the mistake of thinking we could arrange it in a day or two.

First, there were no spare gasoline tins. Then we discovered that the police would have to agree to the car's purchase. The police said they weren't much interested, but were sure the Rumanian Automobile Club would be; in fact, the club would have to arrange for us to take the car out of the country. Then a forty-eight hour national holiday came along, and everything closed down.

About that time we began to realize that the Germans, who had battered their way through south of Lwów and had a raiding *Panzer* column loose in the southeastern Ukraine, were going to reach the border before we did, unless we moved.

We got back to the frontier, minus car, on the fifteenth. The Polish government was already there, camped out in a handful of little towns just over the line.

Beck, Smigly-Rydz and others of the inner council were at Kutu, west of Cernauti, and the diplomats at a village called Zaleszczycki, on the Dniester, north of it. We struck out for Zaleszczycki.

Never, until France crumbled like a puff ball nine months later when her leaders quit cold, was there a more complete picture of defeat than the road which wound up from the river bridge through the heavy-leafed trees of the town. It was lined with staff cars, trucks, big limousines from Warsaw, fire engines and hook-and-ladder combines from Cracow and Lodz, little family jaloppies from everywhere, all loaded till the springs lay on the axles, all a half-inch thick with yellow Ukrainian dust.

The people in them ranged from grand ladies to shopkeepers, from diplomats to officers who had gone halfway across Poland from the front to rescue their wives and children, and brought them down south where safety was a jump away. There was no rubble of retreat, because the fighting troops were still doing their best to hold, somewhere up to the north and west.

Headquarters for the diplomats was a former hospital, three down-at-the-heel, two-storied wings surrounding an overgrown plot of grass. The first acquaintance I met was a Brazilian, who said: "Well things are terrible; but at least I found some water to shave with this morning."

Two small Japanese secretaries of embassy squatted on their haunches in the pathway with a melon they had scrounged somewhere and broken into rough halves. They were gouging the seeds out with their fingers, and digging in with their teeth like a couple of kids after a raid on a melon patch. They grinned juicily.

Protocol had vanished somewhere up the dusty road, perhaps about the point where a carload of diplomats discovered the Papal Nuncio in his robes, standing in the ditch, waving his hat at passing cars and shouting: "Planes, planes, get into the fields." The Nuncio had remarked sadly to a friend, a little later, that perhaps he should become air-raid warden at the Vatican, on the basis of experience.

At Zaleszczycki, everyone had scuffed shoes and dirty clothes and tired eyes. Little groups stood around talking. It looked like the last stop, but nobody knew for certain. Resistance might continue for weeks. Few of them had bothered yet to get some sort of accommodation.

The Biddles and the rest of the American staff were camping out in moldy state in the building they had been told

would be the embassy henceforth. It was an old palace of scores of rooms, none of them habitable. The place had not been used in years. Many windows were missing—at that stage of World War II a glass-less window was a great inconvenience. Most of the furniture was gone. In the blowsy entrance hall, the only items of decoration were a moth-eaten bald eagle over the door and a great, fly-specked chart of “The Birds of the World.”

The housing problem was easy during the day. Everyone sat under the old trees, in the uncut grass of the park. There were a few stray dogs. Across the river, on the high hills along the Rumanian bank, an occasional bored sentry lay on his back on the slope and watched a very peaceful sky. At night you slept on whatever was available, but that was a lot better than most people in Poland had, and nobody complained.

The only man with a real cause for complaint was North Winship, the Counselor of Embassy, who had succeeded in buying himself in Krzemieniec a bed, a dresser, a wash stand and a chair, all of them second-hand but all very serviceable. He had had to leave them behind; all he had left were a few cans of food and the best part of a case of American soft drinks—soft drinks are a funny thing to save, but they are very refreshing on a long trip over a dusty road.

Krzemieniec had been the intermediary stop. There the Germans had come, too, about mid-day, and with their bombs had made an ugly mess out of the market place. The explosions must have been audible in Russia, where the troops were massing.

Every hour, in the towns along the border, the crowds got thicker, and the people tried to get through here, then there, into Rumania which nobody had yet at-

tacked. Enough got through to make the others keep trying.

Besterman and his family were at one border post, although I did not find them until a few days later, in Bucharest. They had run out of gasoline in Lwów. Besterman's brother, finding the municipal offices empty, had used the abandoned official stamps to issue himself enough fuel permits to reach the border. They all got through, except that the brother turned north again to look after his mother. She would not leave Poland, because then she did not understand what it would be like to live in occupied territory.

Out over the border came hundreds of British and French refugees, and a lot of men who could not speak a word of Polish, but who were dressed as Polish peasants or priests, and probably should have been in Allied uniform. They were the men who had been there unofficially, and who had to remain unofficial until they could reach their nearest consulate and establish their identity.

On the Rumanian side, the great pumpkins grew a richer orange among the stubble. The peasant carts churned up the dust and the old women scurried into the fields as the cars passed, considerably less courageous than the dogs which ran along barking at the rear wheel.

People sat around in the villages, in front of the little hole-in-the-wall cafés, almost as if they never had heard of war, almost as if some of the bitterest fighting in history had not rolled over them twenty-five years or so before.

In Cernauti, which was coming into its own as a refugee city, the men from the currency black market branched out into Leica cameras, and second-hand cars out of Poland, and food and civilian clothes, or whisky or bad brandy brilliantly labeled.

The hotel porters, most of whom spoke much too good

German to have been Rumanian born, as they said, were very affable to the guests.

Poland ended September 17, 1939, except for Warsaw, which was holding out, and a few divisions here and there in the south, and the guerrillas who still fight when they can; and except for those who got themselves out somehow and started for France or the Near East, where they could be given something with which to fight again.

That was the day Russia marched in the back door. We had heard rumors at daybreak. The radio had confirmed them at breakfast. Red Colbern, who had gradually sifted down to the border in the ruck of defeat, was the first to see them. He drove his car over a hill, and suddenly came on a long column of tanks and guns. Infantry marched beside them.

The tanks looked unfamiliar. Suddenly we realized they were Russian; the infantry were Polish. The Russians had come over the border shouting “Tovarichi, Tovarichi”—“comrades, comrades.” The Poles thought then they were driving with them, to fight the Germans.

There was hardly a foreigner on the border that day who was not thunderstruck and angered. Stalin had sold out to the man who had sworn to annihilate the Soviet regime, and was grabbing what he could while he could. Poland was being divided as a result of a cold-blooded agreement between two aggressors, one of them ready to start the fight and the other willing to take what he was given as a condition for his neutrality.

It was the same sort of feeling we had a little later, when Russia swallowed the Baltic states and then began the attack on Finland. Looking back, with the Russians taking the of-

fensive after six months of German assault, it seems very clear that Stalin was doing the best he could for Russia. He was gaining time, and getting his country ready. The policy was not pleasant for his neighbors, but it was very realistic, the only realistic element in the whole world outside Hitler's Reich.

It was impossible to appreciate that on the seventeenth day of World War II, because the war was still a sort of private affair between Germany and Poland. Only a few people who had seen the temper of the people of England and knew that they were finally out for a fight, could feel that it wasn't all over. After all, Hitler was sure to make the old "no more claims" peace speech, and the same gangs were still in power in England and France.

So we all damned Russia, and the thousands of refugees who streamed in over the opened borders were sure she was about to cross the Rumanian frontier as well.

Smigly-Rydz and Beck and the rest of the government came over, stayed a few hours or a day, and went on. The refugees went down the road until they were stopped by the police, or until their gasoline gave out. Then they waited hopelessly, or tried to bribe their way with worthless *zloty*. The Rumanian peasants, who are as kind as all simple people, took the *zloty* for food, or gave it without payment, but that first day no bank would accept them through the window. That only came when it developed that the Polish gold had been gotten out by train a day or so before the disaster.

All that afternoon, as the long stream of Poles churned up the dust of the farm roads down toward Cernauti, the planes came over, Polish planes, bombers, fighters and civilian transports, flying in formation and very low, so that they could be easily identified. I must have seen over three hundred pass

Cernauti alone, over twenty times as many as I had ever seen over Warsaw. The Poles had been unable to pit them alone against the overwhelming *Luftwaffe*, so they flew them out to the nearest airport, where the Rumanians could intern them and perhaps sometime use them against the Germans.

For twenty-four hours, until the corps moved on to the comforts of the Athenée Palace in Bucharest, two small Cernauti hotels housed the diplomats and foreign correspondents from Warsaw, and with them as fine a collection of spies and international hangers-on as the Balkans have ever scraped together.

At the Hotel Schwarze Adler, which stood on the market square, Mr. Biddle shouted over a bad telephone line at Ambassador Bullitt in Paris. The conversation was smugly reported in direct quotes next morning in the Berlin *Voelkischer Beobachter*, which profusely thanked a “certain Cernauti newspaper” for obtaining a transcript. The *Voelkischer Beobachter* thought this showed rare journalistic initiative. There were those who remembered how the Berlin telephone lines used to splutter while somebody tuned in, and who credited the *Gestapo* with a certain role in the scoop.

The other hotel—I forget its name, but it was probably the Grand Hotel, or Excelsior, or Palace—furnished the real circus. Nobody had a place to sleep. Diplomats of a dozen nations herded through the small lobby, and shouted at an indifferent telephone operator for the calls they had booked to Bucharest or Stockholm or Rome. The communications had disintegrated to a Godesberg standard.

I was comparatively lucky, because I was telephoning only to Bucharest; at that, the calls came through so infrequently that I had several hundred words of copy each

time. Ferdinand Jahn, taking it all down in longhand at the other end while the line gabbled and whooped and a half dozen operators kept breaking in, deserved a few plus marks in the Golden Book.

The only people who kept calm in the hotel lobby that afternoon were two Japanese diplomats, who sat quietly at a small table drinking beer. Periodically, they got a call through to Tokyo, and everyone else howled in frustration and demanded to know how it happened. It was very easy. They were using a wireless circuit which had no other traffic, and the land line operators were so intrigued at the distance involved that they always put the calls through immediately.

The wash of a beaten nation flooded south and east out of Cernauti next morning, down the railroad and down an incredibly bad road toward Bucharest, where there was a Polish embassy and perhaps someone who would know what to do. It began as a flood, and slowly trickled. Cars broke down or ran out of gasoline. Men in uniform—many had changed at the border—were interned. Those whose papers were not in order were stopped by the police cordons stretched across the road every few miles. Only a few made it direct.

I covered the distance in Burke Elbrick's big Buick, eighteen body-racking hours for what would have been an easy morning's drive out of New Haven or Sioux City or Wenatchee.

Be it said here that the reputation Polish roads had gained as the worst in the world is entirely unjustified. The main road down to Bucharest, until you hit the paved stretch the oil barons built as far as their fields at Ploesti, is infinitely worse. It is worse even than “The Road the King's Son Took,”

which ran from Addis Ababa to Dessie, in Ethiopia, and was named in honor of the Duke of Gloucester.

It was called the *Route Nationale*, and some enthusiast bribed by the travel bureau had sketched it in on the maps as *de luxe* all the way. Undoubtedly someone, sometime, had surveyed it as a future highway. A certain amount of gravel had been dumped, not in the pot holes or the long stretches of fine Balkan mud, but along the sides or on the occasional hard patches where the cars could flick it off into the bushes.

Some stretches had been paved, but that was somewhere about the end of World War I, and the contractor had used remarkably little tar in the surface, and sun and rain had done the rest. On the open stretches it was often possible to do 20 miles an hour. In the towns, it was all rutted mud. We stalled only once, thanks to plenty of spare power. The little European cars stuck everywhere.

Once in a while we waited for the Embassy truck, which bulled its way through behind us at a steady 10 miles an hour, disregarding the bumps. It was manned by Dombrowski, a small, serious Pole, and Ladyslaw, long and lugubrious, who had been a sort of general factotum in Warsaw. Ladyslaw, whose woe had overwhelmed him years before, found the Rumanian road a bit too much. Each time the truck stopped behind us he took a pull at a bottle of vodka cushioned beside him on the front seat, poured his loose-jointed self down into the road, spat, and said disgustedly “luxe—bah.”

Behind the truck drove Mike in the big car, playing the radio, which was full of German victory marches. Once in a while radio Warsaw came through with another message of defiance.

The Poles along the road were not defiant. They were

beaten, as they plugged on to the southeast in their little cars, or their Cracow fire engines, or their overloaded trucks. Sometimes they stopped in the hill towns for food, and the Rumanian peasants were very generous. Sometimes they stopped because there was nowhere left to go, farther on, and made bivouacs in the fields.

They were not defiant, but defiance was about to grow in them again, and they were beginning to talk of how to get to Paris, where there might be guns for men to fight with.

Most people arrived in Bucharest in what they stood up in, or little more. The tailors did a land office business in new suits, cut from material which was guaranteed straight from Britain. I acquired one which the refugee Austrian who tailored it had cut so carefully that "Made in England" in bright yellow woven letters appeared on the edge of each pants pocket. The custom shoemakers furnished the latest models, with built-in Balkan squeaks, in three days.

Shirts were gaudy, but cheap. I still have a pair of pajamas bought in a hurry which looked conservative Paisley at the time and turned out to be neo-Rococo. I bought some ties which fortunately were left in a suitcase in a hotel in Amsterdam, and may be there yet unless they suited some German's taste.

Everyone bathed, and joined the crowd in the hotel lobby. There seemed to be more agents than ever. Edith von Kohler had a new gray car and a chauffeur.

Gradually, people drifted off to Paris. They were the ones who had passports and money. Those without money began selling their cars. Long lines of cars stood in the streets, to be picked up for third class fare on the Simplon run, plus a little more for food. The men who had been interned began

drifting in. They had discovered you could get “leave” from the camp, and a change of clothes, if you had enough *lei* to distribute where they would be appreciated. The men who were sure to be valuable, particularly the pilots, disappeared rapidly by fast trains for the west. Those who were suspect for their past associations had great trouble getting their passports put in order. They could consider themselves lucky not to be confined upcountry, like Smigly-Rydz and Beck.

One famous Polish statesman escaped from Bucharest to Paris in a first class sleeping compartment reserved for the baggage of a personage who convinced the railway officials he must have all his belongings near him.

The statesman sat in a corner by the window, with the baggage piled all around him, and above him. Every so often, someone came in and pulled the stuff away for long enough to feed him and give him a drink. Then he was walled in again.

Four of us flew up to the Dniester at Tighina one day, and spent twelve hours of the next covering a hundred miles in crab-fashion skids over a perfect quagmire of a road. We were inspecting the Rumanian defenses. We saw one pillbox on a bald hill over the river. On the far bank lay Russia, a long green stretch with white towns which the Rumanians later attacked under the swastika of Adolf Hitler.

At Cetatea Alba, where the river reaches the sea, we had too much cheap caviar and vodka in a little basement night club with a bad *balalaika* orchestra. Next morning, two large Rumanians right behind us in the plane ate smoked fish all the way to Bucharest. Our Turkish pilot hedge-hopped to beat the low ceiling. The combination was very bad.

CHAPTER 15

BULGARIA appears on the fold right after the Rumanian visa. My experience with Bulgaria consists of one long-distance look from the other bank of the Danube, in company with a Rumanian customs inspector who, incidentally, gave me a sage bit of Balkan advice. When Calinescu was killed, connections with the outside world became impossible, and so I started for Bulgaria by car. It was dusk when I reached Giurgiu, the great oil port on the Danube. The river is very wide at that point. The last boat of the evening had gone. I asked the customs man if I couldn't hire a rowboat. He shrugged his shoulders.

"A boat, yes," he said, "but nobody to row it. You see, we are quite careful here. If you were to start across the river at this time of day and we didn't shoot you, the Bulgarians would be sure to."

About that moment telephone communications were reopened, and I returned to Bucharest.

The next visa is Hungarian, issued September 28, 1939 at Bucharest. I arrived in Budapest the morning of Hitler's triumphant speech from Danzig. The Fuehrer was in good voice, and he made the old "I-have-no-more-demands-to-

make” sound even more convincing than usual. Fortunately nobody in France and England took any notice of that angle, and even the Hungarians at the radio in the hotel lobby thought it was pretty funny. What none of us yet realized was the sort of war he was prepared to wage if the I-have-no-more-etc. was not accepted at its face value, and how many million people would be dragged down in the process.

Budapest was gayer than ever that fall. The loony mechanisms of the stage at the Arizona maintained it as Number One hot spot of the Balkans. The whisky was apt to be very bad and the champagne was sweet and expensive, but there was lots of noise and everything ran full blast until 5:00 A. M. or later. The restaurants were full of good food and music.

That was the surface. Underneath it, war had already reached Hungary. There were the weary men in leather coats and peaked caps who hiked over the mountain trails down from Poland, to go on to France, and whom every Hungarian was ready to help on their way. There was the usual gang of spies, counter-spies, “economic representatives” and assorted international hangers-on. There was the usual nucleus of correspondents sent out from London or Paris to wait for something to happen, and meanwhile to edify their readers with stories starting “Neutral travelers just returned from Germany state . . .”

In Hungary that fall, everyone I met seemed to be anti-German, deeply and whole-heartedly so, but with a sort of exasperated resignation to the fact that sooner or later he would be forced into line in the *Drang nach Osten* to fight with Adolf Hitler. I tried to find out whether there wouldn't be revolt and sabotage if Hungary had to go to war for Germany. A friend in the government explained it to me in the frosty sunlight of a café terrace on the river promenade.

“Of course there will be unrest,” he said. “But we will fight when we are told to. What else can we do? England and France can’t help us with men. They are too far away. And it’s going to take them years to arm themselves, let alone the people they might want to help. Germany is close, and she is successful; we don’t like her, but if she is on the upsurge, a lot of us will be ready to profit by it.

“Don’t forget, too, that Russian Communism has reached our northern border again. We had a taste of Communism here.” He watched the strong, oily flood of the Danube slide past the steep, gray buildings on the far hill, and added, “You know, Bela Kun threw my father into that river.”

The Turkish visa on the page opposite the Hungarian represents three hours’ wait in a crowded anteroom, and nothing more. It got me as far as Belgrade, where an agitated string correspondent burst through my compartment door on the Orient Express at 7:00 A. M. or so to announce that New York wanted me to go to Zurich instead, and would I please hurry about dressing, because there were two minutes left before departure time.

Two hours in Belgrade, spent getting another Hungarian visa. Overnight in Budapest, spent at the Arizona, for my sins. Then the train for Italy, en route to Zurich via Milan. Then Zurich and a little later, Geneva; then Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, England, and then on my way again, and the crossing of more borders. Days of hustle and bustle, interviews with numerous officials and encounters with strangers of suspicious mien and mysterious activities—observers of the international pot fast reaching the boiling point, or very likely having a hand in the boiling process; days of what seemed interminable waiting for things to happen; and of

concern over future events which obviously could not long be delayed; days of grasping at the few facts obtainable, and of sifting—and usually discarding—the flood of rumors. My comings and goings across numerous borders covered a period of about four months of “sitzkrieg,” which is represented by a handful of visas and many marginal notations.

Even Switzerland had changed in two months, although war had swept far to the north of it. There was a guard at the Swiss end of the St. Gothard, and up in the snows which flank the Pass men were building new pillboxes and training with the deadly little Swiss mountain guns.

The train filled with uniforms; I couldn't recall ever having seen a uniform in Switzerland, before the war. The men didn't quite seem to fit into uniforms, as a German does or even a Frenchman. They still looked like hotel men or tourist guides or watch salesmen. But they all looked cheerful and eager, and the captain of engineers in my compartment assured me they were quite ready to fight anyone who attacked them.

“We are good shots down here,” he said. “For years we have divided all the shooting trophies in Europe with the Finns. We don't have much equipment, but we do have our mountains and our rifles, and the combination may be enough to convince the Germans it would be cheaper to leave us alone. If not—well, we don't like Adolf Hitler, and we would fight very hard.”

He told me the latest Swiss story, about the German who came to Basel on business, noted the barbed wire and the barricades on the edge of town toward Germany, and asked a Swiss friend how many men Switzerland could mobilize.

“About a half million, possibly,” replied the Swiss.

"And what do you think you would do if we sent a million men to attack you?" asked the German.

"That's easy," said the Swiss. "We would shoot twice."

The engineer grinned, and admitted that unfortunately modern wars were not as easy as all that.

"We have always been quality workmen here," he said, "but I'm afraid quality isn't enough to save the small nations these days."

Zurich and Geneva were a strange contrast. Zurich hasn't very much scenery to offer, and sticks to its hard-headed business. The Swiss National Exhibition was on, war or no war, and the city was packed with trade representatives and sightseers. I had never thought of the Swiss as sightseers before; everyone else always seemed to be going to them, to look at them and their mountains.

Everyone was bemoaning the loss of trade, the collapse of the market for watches, the empty hotels. Even so, everyone seemed to be working hard.

Geneva looked completely dead. The last time I had been there was during a League session, when the town was tremendously alive. It was Briand's last session, and Litvinov and Venizelos and Grandi and Curtius and a dozen other big names were in town. There was a great coming and going in hotel corridors, and the Bavaria was fuggy with beer, tobacco and politics every night; someone in the Japanese delegation had discovered that a four-cent French franc would fit the twenty-cent Swiss franc slot machine in the Metropole, to the consternation of the bartender.

That fall, there were still a few League offices open. Perhaps there still are. But the town had a vacant feel to it, and I was glad to leave.

You can take the fast, direct train back to Zurich, and

skirt the mountains, or you can go via Montreux and Gstaad and the Lakes of Thun and Luzern, on a series of small, breathless trains which lift themselves up into the high valleys of the Bernese Oberland and the steep pass over beyond Interlaken. If you have a sunny day for the trip, as I did, you can forget the war which has flooded both hemispheres, and lean out the open window to watch the great peaks, and eavesdrop on the gossip the conductor passes out to the village station master at each stop. It was very tempting to think of dropping off the train at Gstaad, in among the peaks, and leaving war coverage to other people.

There was a German girl on the train who told me what great things Hitler had done for the Third Reich, and how Germany was not to be beaten and would inevitably rule Europe. Then she admitted that she was returning under orders, to work somewhere in the place of a man called to the army, and that she didn't want to go. She said she hoped the nations still at peace would have the strength to stay out of the war. By that, of course, she meant the United States, which is constantly in the back of every German mind, and the only nation a German really fears.

Paris, in the blackout of a late fall afternoon in 1939, was no longer the “City of Light.” Neither was it blackout. Shop windows in the Galleries Lafayette blazed out into the boulevard, and the hangings over the café fronts were a sort of grudging concession to official regulations. I spoke to the taxi driver about it—did you ever notice how newspapermen gravitate to taxi drivers for their “man in the street” reaction?—and he said he guessed if they wanted to, the people could turn the lights out quickly enough. Always granting that the *Boche* really came over.

I ran into a mass of uniforms on the terrace of the Café de la Paix the first morning. There were bulky, ill-fitting blue *poilu* overcoats, bright Spahi cloaks, occasionally the drab, utilitarian British battledress, and a scattering of rakish, diamond caps from Poland.

On the edge of the curb, a little man in a bright blue cap sold a London morning edition which told all about the economic blockade and how it was about to strangle Germany.

I had coffee and *croissants* with a Pole who had come in from the Balkans under the baggage of a Ford station wagon. He said it really hadn't been so bad, because he had to crawl under only when they crossed the borders. His party had stopped at few hotels, and when they did he had shifted for himself, because the hotel porters always ask to see your passport first.

Like most Poles, he had nothing to do. There was talk of forming a Polish army and an air force, even of mobilizing the Polish miners from northern France to fill the ranks. But the Poles were a joke, that fall, to the Parisians, who said they had put up a miserable show.

The Café Rotonde became a great rendezvous for the Poles, and I used to drink coffee with them there, or meet them in my hotel room, because we could talk German without ranking as subversive elements. I don't know why it was that most Poles I knew spoke better German than French. But it was a relief to me to stop battling taxi drivers in French and start using a language in which I felt at home.

Most of the Poles were broke. I watched two deflated tycoons at the next table nurse a couple of bad French beers for an hour, each trying to hint the other into buying him a real lunch. I saw a former official of one of the key minis-

tries in Warsaw go from table to table at a café near the Madeleine, obviously looking for an invitation to sit down. When my companion suggested a sandwich, he ordered three. He was out of a job, because he was too closely connected with the “Beck Era,” which was blamed for Poland’s collapse.

Everyone in Paris said Hitler was afraid to attack France, and would smash himself if he did. Everyone said he probably would die slowly, of blockade and economic war. Everyone had big ideas of the postwar Europe which would be created. The “Federation of the Danube,” with Otto von Habsburg at the helm, was very popular at the moment. Nobody considered the feelings of the Czechs, who after years of bitter hatred had discovered they loved the Poles, and who wanted to federate with them.

It was pretty clear in everyone’s mind that Germany would have to be divided up after the victory, with France getting the whole left bank of the Rhine, et cetera, et cetera. The unfortunate part of the whole thing, as it developed later, was that nobody had any ideas about how to win the war. That would come inevitably, “*parce que nous sommes les plus forts.*” There were big maps everywhere on the streets which proved in bright red ink that the two western democracies had more of the map, and more of the millions on it, than Hitler could ever hope to mobilize.

Unfortunately, the map didn’t show that the black bit which was Germany represented a tough fighting machine, while the big red blobs which spread out to the four corners were two complacent nations of about as many millions as the black patch held, plus several hundred million who didn’t care very much one way or the other.

I didn’t realize that, of course. The story of the strength

of the French army had been very consistently sold, and it was comforting to think that eventually Hitler would attack in desperation the one force which could beat his *Wehrmacht*. The French might be weak in the air, but they were invincible on the ground.

There were some in Paris who were alarmed at plane production, which blundered along laboriously on old models, while the good new ones were tested and turned out by hand, and should have been on mass assembly lines. I heard a few people worry about a winter of complete idleness, and what it would do to several million men who were twiddling their thumbs along the border.

There was a widely circulated picture of a French sentry, complete with pipe and a stray kitchen chair, who had made himself comfortable somewhere in the west while he waited for the Germans. It was very easy to laugh him off with an "Isn't that the French for you? They'll be all right when the time comes."

Down along the Rhine, the Germans were using big, motorized loudspeakers to attack the French army, cruising them up and down the right bank blasting out long quotations from Napoleon on England, and reminding the left bank that Great Britain would "fight to the last Frenchman." When President Lebrun visited the Maginot Line near Strasbourg, the Germans welcomed him with a large transparent of himself hung between two blockhouses. The story may not be true, but everyone I met in Paris believed it, and thought it was pretty clever of the Germans.

In a Paris paper, I read "the Rhine was deathly silent tonight, except for the dismal clank of the pumps from the German side, as they sucked the water out of the Siegfried Line." It was common knowledge that the Germans had built their

blockhouses too close to the river, and that anyway, the concrete was poor quality and was not being given enough chance to set.

I wasn't so sure of that one, remembering the pictures in the German papers, and how deep the line looked on the maps, and how the first work on it had been begun before 1936. But I was sure the Maginot Line was better, which is quite possibly true.

Midway between Paris and Brussels the “through” express stopped, its engine doors glowing dully in the wet black-out, and disgorged a mixed cargo of peasants, soldiers getting back from leave, Dutch salesmen and odd travelers, onto the most dismal platform in western Europe. It was Feignies, where the soldiers and the peasants sloshed off through the mud, and everyone else made himself ready for a two-hour bout with the passport and baggage control.

Coming up to the border station, the flat, dull country seemed very peaceful. There was almost no military transport on the roads which, except for a couple of pillboxes, a line or two of antitank obstacles and some rusty wire, did not look fortified. The French officer in my compartment was fifty or more. He had been called up in August when the crisis was at its height, and was now demobilized again and on his way back to Brussels, where he had lived since the last war. Both of us took comfort from the fact that modern fortifications were always below ground, with their guns so well hidden that nobody could expect to see them from a train.

The Germans went through that border in less time than it took the trainload to battle its way through Feignies.

The schedules seemed to have been arranged to bring all

trains into Feignies after dark. There were three porters who garnished themselves with a great variety of luggage hung on an intricate system of straps, and staggered off into the blackness toward a dimly lit sign reading *Douane*. It was easier to carry your own luggage, and there was plenty of time for two trips, if you couldn't carry it all in one.

Inside the station were two old women with sharp voices, who went through the bags and the bundles and boxes and trunks with a persistency which only a French peasant could have. There was one old man in a blue cap, who handed out currency export forms six or eight at a time, then checked them against wallets and pocketbooks; he was a very harassed old man, and indignant at the thought of so many customers. Sometimes he refused either to distribute or check, and stood at his little desk with his hands on his hips and orated. He rushed me through with a glance, then spent five minutes on the French officer, whom he clearly suspected of desertion.

The immigration control functioned slowly, but with ample pace to keep ahead of the old man. When the officer at the desk saw my passport, and its liberal sprinkling of German visas, he handed it without a word to a man who stood quietly behind him. The man took me to one side, and asked me in German what I had been doing in France. I replied in English that I was a newspaperman on my way through. He tried French, then finally good English. I pointed out that all my German visas were prewar, and as evidence of good faith showed him the Polish visa of a week from the start of the invasion. Finally he let me through.

"If you are crossing this border many times, it might be well to get a new passport," he said.

That ended Feignies, except for the waiting. I had only a knapsack, a blue-paper Bucharest suitcase, and a typewriter.

Most people seemed to be trying to get through with a complete wardrobe, and the family heirlooms to boot. Finally the train pulled out. The French officer and I had a drink of his brandy, and suddenly we discovered that the lights were lit in the towns along the way.

The Hotel Metropole was unofficial press headquarters in Brussels. I had always stayed there in peacetime, because there was a UP news ticker in the lobby, and it seemed more like home that way. People used to crowd around the ticker during the crisis days, but by now they were already bored with the “sitzkrieg,” and nobody seemed to look at the machine.

The upstairs had a strong Loop flavor; Bob Casey, of the *Chicago Daily News*, Larry Rue of the *Chicago Tribune*, and Richard Busvine of the *Chicago Times* all lived there. All were veterans of the strange, coy sort of war which was being waged within sight of the Luxembourg border, on the upper Moselle, for the benefit of foreign correspondents. We went down to Luxembourg together.

Remich stood high on the left bank of the Moselle, just below the point where the French, German and Luxembourg borders meet. It was a perfect headquarters for unofficial observers of what classed as war on the western front. The Bellevue was not much of a hotel, as hotels go. The rooms were small and bare, and the plumbing on the rudimentary side. But Klopp had a fine cellar, good food, a terrace overlooking the “battlefield,” and a boundless enthusiasm for the newspaper business.

You could drive for miles, down along the river, only fifty yards or so from the Siegfried Line. The paper in Paris had been right, to an extent. There were some bunkers built too

close to the water, which was lapping around them even in the fall. One had slipped quietly into the current. But they were nothing more than machine-gun posts, and on the hills behind them were great, low lying bastions of smooth, dun-painted cement which looked very efficient indeed. On the crests of the hills, big screens had been set up, and behind them men were digging and pouring more steel and concrete into the ground.

Business was just moving in Luxembourg. I had almost sold a contract in Belgium. In Holland, everything was normal. Virgil Pinkley, over from London headquarters, was lining up new clients who wanted neutral news of the war, and who would and could pay for it. Holland had hardly changed.

There were a half dozen machine-gun nests at Schiphol airdrome, outside Amsterdam, and off in a corner hangar, away from the shiny big K.L.M. express planes, were a handful of little Dutch army pursuit planes, marked in bright orange, which I had never seen there before. Occasionally along the roads came a platoon of fresh-looking young soldiers, obviously rather self-conscious in their new uniforms, riding the inevitable bicycles.

It seemed right that the Dutch army, or what there was of it in evidence, should be on two wheels, because the bicycle rules the road in Holland. I have talked to browbeaten automobile owners who assured me that a cyclist can do no wrong. I do know that there are few things in the way of human emotion to equal the look of scorn and indignation on the face of a Dutch cyclist if an automobile gets in his way.

To the west, along the German border, pillboxes were

being constructed inside windmills. The average Dutchman, though, counted most on water for protection if invasion came—which it wouldn't. Water had saved Holland when the revolt against Spain was raging. If necessary, great areas would be flooded, and movement by the German army would become impossible.

There were those who were not so confident. They had heard more and more of the German airborne troops, and reports seeped across the border of a large concentration of *Sumpfwagen*, automobiles with six-foot wheels and very wide tires, built to negotiate waterlogged country at good speed.

That sort of calculation never entered the minds of most Dutchmen I met. This war, like the last, was going to pass them by. Amsterdam was a beehive of espionage. So it had been before, when both sides found it most useful to keep one back door open through which their agents could operate. When a couple of carloads of Gestapo streaked across the border at Venlo and kidnaped two British agents who had been unwary enough to fall for a decoy, everyone was properly indignant, and at the same time thrilled a bit at the deep international game which was being played.

It was difficult to understand the insistence of the average Dutchman in his refusal to see what was coming. Perhaps it was because his life had been much too comfortable for too long, and because the realm of the Guilder was a thing he could never conceive of as menaced. He knew that Hitler had never worried a moment over the rights of any small nation. Pressure had been brought more than once, in a tentative sort of way, on Holland itself. He knew that mere failure to provoke was without effect on a man eminently able to provoke himself. He knew that by Hitler's time-table

the war must be short, and that back doors were of minor importance against airfields an hour from England. But it just wasn't going to happen to Holland.

England was still fighting on mealy-mouthed speeches, badly-timed pamphlet raids, "business as usual," and the complacent certainty of success. The success formula was easy to sketch out in Commons or in the corner pub. Hitler couldn't attack France. He had not yet "dared" to raid her from the air. Eventually, Britain would arm an army and equip an air force. Meanwhile Germany would be feeling the effects of blockade, her production would drop, morale would suffer, and one fine day an allied force would go over to the attack. The fact that Hitler still held the initiative and was not one to leave it unused, was beside the point. If he used it, he would just batter himself into futility against the French steel and concrete.

The Royal Navy functioned admirably and without fuss in the secrecy of the high seas, because the British navy has always been a well-trained fighting force with a continuing tradition which all the cheese-paring of economy-minded legislation could not break. Quietly, it had set the blockade to working, flung out its blue water patrols, and begun scraping up the odd merchantmen, supply ships and commerce raiders, and sinking submarines. The convoys were assembled and escorted out to sea, and others brought in with every tide. Poop guns and antiaircraft machine guns were installed on the freighters, and big luxury liners quietly became troopships or armed merchant cruisers.

The arrival of the first British troops in France had been a big spiritual boost. Everyone knew they had been followed by more transports, and more still. What was less generally

known was that the force in France, the most modern England had ever fielded, was still makeshift in most equipment and almost entirely lacking in some. The army was struggling back from twenty years of systematic neglect which had blighted not only the whole machine of war production but, seemingly, all continuing military research and the whole vital, constantly developing conception of war.

Production ground slowly away at field guns which were too light, at antitank guns which might well prove so, and attempted to give the infantry rifles enough, at least, and some machine guns; new models which were modern required laborious testing and tooling. The need for tanks was so great that at least one type went straight from drawing board to production, with no test ever having been made.

The army's morale was sound. The conscripts were eager to train, when weapons were available to train with. One day the forces would be properly armed. In November, 1939 they were a strange contrast to the Germans I remembered seeing on the roads that spring.

The men carried rifles, and a few Bren guns, wicked light machine guns which are fine weapons if you have enough of them; there were a handful of antitank rifles. I remembered the German infantry, in which every fourth man seemed to carry a tommy gun, every eighth a machine gun and every company its light mortars and 37-millimeter antitank guns. The fire power, man for man, seemed to favor the Germans by three or four to one.

I remembered how every German army vehicle, from staff cars, trucks, troop carriers and gun crew units up to the big prime movers which hauled the siege guns, was specialized from the tires up. Britain was still improvising from commercial vehicles, and rightly so, because they could be turned

out in quantity. But in some cases the vehicles were not up to the job.

The R.A.F. was still an unknown quantity. The tiny Advanced Striking Force in France was flying Hurricanes, which were supposed to be good. But there were other planes in service at which even the British laughed. Nobody I talked to in England that fall knew much about the R.A.F. It was generally understood that plane production was 'way up. Optimists, who flourish in England, put it higher than Germany's. The Spitfire, which some people had seen in the air before the war, was supposed to be a good machine. The Wellington was a good bomber, and everyone said the power-operated turret built into its tail, and into other heavy machines, had proved very successful.

Fortunately, with the exception of the more optimistic contributions, it was all true. The R.A.F. was still small; the defensive mentality and the befuddled incompetence of the “Munichers” were holding it back, and would keep it from effective use until summer. But it was very good, and getting better as fast as a grand training system and the production of two miracle planes could make it.

There was food rationing in England, but I didn't notice it because I ate only in restaurants. You didn't need coupons in a London hotel, or in the little holes-in-the-wall in Soho where you could escape the “spring greens” and the Brussels sprouts. At the Savoy and the Berkeley and the Ritz, there were menus as long as your arm, and the wine cellars were full. At a pub called the Lord Belgrave, just off Leicester Square, you could still get the finest steaks in London, picking them out beforehand for cut and size.

The blackout was a nuisance, but it was far, far better than

the French version, and a comfort for that reason. And it did not seem to hamper the movements of the people who packed the hotel ballrooms, and the Café de Paris, and the dozens of “bottle parties” every night. The buses ran almost normally, and there were always taxis to take you everywhere in town.

The finest thing about England in those days was the fact that, with Munich still in the saddle in Westminster, the average man was determined that the war be fought out to a finish. There may have been people in the government who thought that a peace should be negotiated. There may have been men in the City financial offices who would have done anything to save what they had. But the temper of the people was a good guarantee against anything of that sort. They were going to finish Hitler off somehow.

I closed my apartment on Chelsea Embankment, overlooking the Thames, because it was equidistant from two of the biggest power plants in London and looked rather unhealthy if bombing ever began. The manager of the building complained that most of the other tenants seemed to have had the same idea. Then I went back to the Continent, where the Germans were supposed to be on the verge of a new offensive.

A few days later, in Brussels again, after Paris, I found a message asking me to go to Copenhagen. Everyone in Brussels seemed a bit relieved by the fact that Russia had attacked Finland. It was difficult to see why, because the Germans had nothing to do with the Finnish war, and were obviously concentrating on production. It must have been just that the center of battle had shifted away from the west.

The Copenhagen UP office was one of those minor hells which any crisis creates in the news agency business. It was a relay point.

A relay point originates little or no copy of its own. Its prime purpose in existing is to handle copy from other people, taking it in from one direction and funneling it out toward New York. Three months before, the Copenhagen office had existed only for an incoming service to Danish clients. Since then Harold Peters, ex-Buenos Aires, ex-Berlin and ex-Spanish War, had been building it up for a possible crisis. At least we had desks, chairs, three telephones and a couple of teleprinters through to Amsterdam.

The technique in Copenhagen was complex. There were correspondents in Stockholm, Oslo, Bergen, Trondhjem, and Kirkenaes in the far north of Norway who telephoned in regularly, and a dozen others who contributed from time to time. Copenhagen kept in touch with them, recording the calls on a dictaphone and then transcribing and cableizing them for the wire. That was the routine. The main job was to maintain communications with Finland, regularly throughout the day, and specifically to have a line open when the Finnish communiqué put in an appearance in the late afternoon. That meant putting in calls for a half dozen different times, while the man at the other end did likewise, and hoping that one of them would connect with the communiqué.

Webb Miller and Norman Deuel were in Helsinki, and Hubert Uexkuell up in the north, where the Finns scored their first big successes. Each of them was on the phone several times daily, from town or the front. Connections were reasonably good to Helsinki. To Viipuri, on the Carelian Isthmus, where Webb spent most of his time, they were fair. Sometimes you could hear the antiaircraft banging away

outside his window. From Rovaniemi, in the north, they were atrocious, and the calls usually had to be taken longhand.

Under perfect conditions, a communique could be gotten from Helsinki to San Francisco, say, in well under ten minutes. The moment the call came through to Copenhagen, one of us started taking it direct on a typewriter, while the other opened the teleprinter line to Amsterdam. As the communiqué came in, it was cut into ten-word or twenty-word bits, and each sent on the moment it was ready. From Amsterdam it was teleprinted, almost letter by letter as it came in, to London. There it hit the direct cable to New York, and from New York it could be teleprinted almost instantaneously across continent.

That was when things worked, which was most of the time. When they didn't work the call from Helsinki would be delayed, the connection would be bad, and the German long distance exchange in Dortmund, which handled the Amsterdam connection, would cut you off in the middle for some unknown Teutonic reason, and refuse to re-establish the contact.

Copenhagen was gay as ever. There was still an hors d'oeuvres menu a yard long at Oskar Davidson's, and beautiful tea music at the Vivex, and good dancing and floor shows at a half dozen cabarets. *Madelon* and *Tipperary* and *We're Going to Hang out our Washing on the Stegried Line* were favorites with everyone, and the orchestra never seemed to play German songs. Probably Copenhagen was gay because, as one Dane told me, “When they want to take us over, they can do it by long distance telephone. Why worry?”

While I was in Copenhagen, a dozen friends dropped in from Berlin for a breather. All of them promptly got sick on the good food, and all of them confirmed the general bloodi-

ness of the atmosphere inside the Reich. All of them were also convinced that the blockade at the moment was no more than a nuisance, that Germany had ample stocks of everything to carry her along for many months, and that she would launch an offensive in the spring which would make Poland look like a garden party.

One of them had brought a half dozen pairs of friends' shoes to be repaired. He went back with several dozen cakes of soap, a great package of knitting wool, and a suitcase full of other unobtainables. Another concentrated on sugar. A third ate cheese the entire time he was in Denmark.

The offices of the Cunard-White Star Line just off City Hall Square filled their windows with photographs showing the navy in action. The German Tourist Office still displayed colorful posters urging everyone to "Come to Beautiful Germany." But Copenhagen's chief preoccupation was aid to Finland.

There were a few volunteers who slipped off to Stockholm, where there was a Finnish recruiting center. The rest of it was the usual well-meaning help which is very useful in its way, but which doesn't win wars. People collected skis for Finland, clothes for Finland, money for Finland and food for Finland. It was obvious even then, and despite her successes, that what Finland was going to need very soon was men, and lots of guns, and a large number of modern fighting planes.

I moved on up to Helsinki just after February 1, and the "sitzkrieg" was over for good.

CHAPTER 16

THE FINNISH visa was stamped in at Vaasa, February 7, 1940 after one of the most desolate trips in the world.

The plane took off from Stockholm on a morning as gray as death, and flew low to the north, over endless tall pine forests smothered in snow. The normal route, to Turku in southwest Finland and thence by car to Helsinki, was too risky to be flown often. The Russians were over Turku almost every day.

At Sundsvall, on the Gulf of Bothnia, we touched down in forty degrees of frost. While we were gulping coffee, a big empty bus drew up. Then a plane came in out of the east, landed in a small artificial blizzard of its own making. Kindly Swedish women began unloading children, a baby in a laundry basket, twins of about two, a few five- to ten-year-olds, and one girl who looked fifteen.

The children had been evacuated from Tampere and Sortavala and Helsinki, and other Finnish towns which had been bombed. Each day a plane-load or two arrived, a sort of trickle out to peace and sanity from the hardship and misery of a nation. They had given the children hot chocolate, and were bundling them into the bus, when our plane took off again.

This time we flew at five hundred feet or under, because the plane would be harder to detect low down, against the tortured ice. I had always pictured ice as smooth, not the sea ice of the Gulf of Bothnia. Wind and changes of weather had jumbled it fantastically into great jagged windrows. Occasionally there was a flat space, occasionally even open water where the ice had broken and drifted apart.

I had heard stories about how horse sledges and even trucks went across the ice in convoy, carrying supplies which otherwise would have had to go north around the Gulf. There was nothing moving on the ice that day. The temperature in the plane dropped until we were freezing even in our fleece coats and heavy stockings.

Then a low coast hardly distinguishable from the ice appeared below, finally there were a few trees, and we dropped down onto an airport which was just like any other snowy field. There was more coffee in the hut to one side, and a bus into town. As we went through the drifted streets, there were a dozen fire-blackened skeletons in the snow to mark where Russian bombs had dropped.

I got to talking in the hotel lobby that afternoon with a Swedish volunteer. I was as indignant as he was of "Stalin's grab," and as determined that the western world must help Finland. The Russians obviously were taking while the taking was good, and it was quite right that they should have been forced to leave the League of Nations (for whatever that was worth).

I remember distinctly that we both agreed Hitler would attack Stalin as soon as it suited his book, and thought Stalin was a fool if he failed to realize that fact. Writing this with Hitler at war in Russia, it seems strange that neither of us

connected up the idea with the Russian invasion of Finland, and hit on the thought that perhaps Stalin knew the inevitable, and acting with ruthlessness in a war where nothing else paid dividends, was preparing his defenses.

Without Hangoe and Carelia and Viipuri, which he took from Finland, and certainly without the three little Baltic states he absorbed, Stalin could never have held Leningrad, and with Leningrad gone, Moscow might have fallen as well.

The wood-burning locomotive was spitting sparks into the night when I arrived at the station to start for Helsinki. The Swedish volunteer got me a ticket and a sleeper, then gave a word of advice.

“Sleep in your clothes,” he warned. “There might be an air raid.”

Twice during that night the train stopped, and I was thankful for his advice. Each time the whistle tooted pantingly, time and again—the signal to evacuate the train. That meant wrapping up in everything you had, covering yourself in a bed sheet for camouflage, and diving out into the snow in the ditch alongside. With 500 other ghosts, I stumbled through the chest high drifts, up the bank and into the thick woods. Each time, we heard planes in the distance, and once we thought there were bombs. The second time, I improved the technique by taking along a bottle. It was lucky, for we were a half hour under the trees. It’s against all the rules, to drink in extreme cold, but it tastes very good going down. The Swede agreed it was worth the risk.

There had been very few bombs in Helsinki, and in the morning sunlight it looked like any other snowed-in city.

There were few cars in the streets, because gasoline was a problem, but otherwise the picture was entirely normal. Normalcy ended at the doors of the Hotel Kaemp.

The Kaemp was another one of those crisis hotels. It had been de luxe when Helsinki was still capital of a Russian province. In the years since the October Revolution, it had been a first haven for foreigners quitting Moscow on leave. When it became press headquarters at the start of the Finnish war, whatever it had left of elegance quickly departed from it.

On the ground floor was Helsinki's most popular restaurant, which opened for breakfast and closed early the next morning when the last guest could be cajoled or driven out. The customers were foreign diplomats, army officers, government officials, correspondents and the usual run of two-bit adventurers and assorted hangers-on. Everyone knew everyone else more or less. Nobody ever was served what he ordered, or within a half hour of his arrival. Half the people ate in normal civilian clothes. The other half seemed to think that skiing clothes and sheepskins must never be taken off in Finland. At least half the Hotel Kaemp was drunk every night. There were a few fights, but there were also a French correspondent and a German who became bosom friends before they discovered each other's nationality, and who thereafter remained firm drinking companions, when they could do so unnoticed.

When the air-raid alarm sounded, which it did several times each day, half the Kaemp disappeared into the cellar. The other half trooped out into the square to watch the fun. The correspondents sprinted through the streets to the Hotel Torni, which had a high tower commanding the city. It was an ideal place to freeze in, because the wind caught it from all angles. Nothing ever happened while I was on the tower.

The planes were always bound elsewhere, and if they came in sight at all they were very high, and the antiaircraft bursts which followed them across the sky seemed to be well below and behind them.

On the first floor of the Kaemp was the press room, presided over by one Captain Silliacus, a man who survived the correspondents because he treated them with amused tolerance; most others would have gone mad. Silliacus handed out the communiqués, arranged the trips to the front, told you where to buy long winter woollies or how to get whisky from the government monopoly. He was chief buffer between the correspondents and a mysterious, wholly unpredictable, force located elsewhere on the first floor which classed as the censorship.

The Finnish censorship was undoubtedly the most unreasonable, pig-headed, hide-bound affair which any warring country ever set up. Its decisions were final. Nobody, to the best of my knowledge, ever saw a Finnish censor. All the howls descended on the worthy Silliacus. So did the protests from the people who thought they should be allowed to fly over the Russian lines.

Daily Silliacus had to keep both Associated Press and United Press happy, which is a considerable job in itself. This involved bitter fights for the telephone to Copenhagen, charges that Ralph Forte, of UP, had suborned the entire Kaemp telephone staff with money, chocolate and soft words, counter-charges that Wade Werner, of AP, carried on lengthy personal conversations at triple rate, just to hold the phone until the communiqué arrived.

Everyone fresh in from the outside was enthusiastic over Pitkaeranta, and Salla, and Suomussalmi, where the Finns had ghosted through the woods, cut up the heavy Russian

columns, then let cold, snow and the snipers gnaw the remnants to pieces. It was all grand copy, because it was a feat of small men defending their homes. But it could not win a war.

Webb Miller had remained on the Isthmus front, where the Finns had held on by their teeth, sweeping the frozen lakes with their machine guns, throwing a battery of old field guns against the masses of long-nosed Russian cannon, halting the tanks with fiery beer bottles, or the branches from trees. The Russian barrage beat Verdun for intensity. Slowly it was increasing, and good, fresh troops had replaced the second-raters who had started the attack. Webb said the Finns, man for man, were far and away the toughest and bravest fighters he had ever seen. He said they were about to lose the war in Carelia, and only immediate help could save them. Just over two days later, the Russians broke through at Summa.

The rumor of the break-through, as often happens, was in circulation thirty-six hours before the event. The Finnish government sent two neutral correspondents down to the front to verify that Summa, the gateway between the lakes and the coast, was still in Finnish hands. They chose Tom Hawkins of the AP and myself.

The road down to Viipuri billowed and swerved through the thick woods. It was packed hard with snow, and the drifts rose to the pines on either side. The thermometer had read twenty below zero at 10 p. m. in Helsinki. The driver was a former motorcycle racer, and drove accordingly. He kept the speedometer needle at around fifty miles an hour through the night, and slowly the speed drove the cold back through the glass and steel. First my ears began to tingle, and I pulled down my fur cap and turned up my high sheepskin collar.

Then the cold began piercing the three pairs of stockings on my feet, and I gradually evolved a system of alternate toe-wiggling and nose-rubbing to keep some life going in the two most vulnerable spots.

Viipuri lay like a city frozen dead in the night; not a sound, not a light, nothing stirring in the snowy streets. From the hills to the southeast came a constant grumble, and the sky seemed to ripple with a vague glow. The long Russian guns were pounding.

We slept until dawn in the local Y.W.C.A., then picked up Lieutenant Enkel, who was to take us to the front. The car started southeast, pushed up into the hills over a succession of narrow, snowbound roads which threaded through thick young forest. Then we got out, slid down a 45-degree path of almost glare ice, and found ourselves at a battalion headquarters.

It was the most perfect job of camouflage I had ever seen. Thick trees made certain that it could never be spotted from the air. But it would have been quite possible to pass it at ten yards, on the ground, in broad daylight, without noticing a thing. Netting hung with snowy pine branches concealed the path leading to the entrance itself, and the steep incline leading down to the big dugout. Heavy drifts had hidden all traces of digging. There were a couple of small, sheet iron stovepipes sticking from the drifts, and a little light blue smoke came from each. A couple of pairs of skis had been shoved into a thick bush. Everyone wore white, either the heavy, white canvas coats lined with fleece which the Swedish volunteers had adopted from the Finns, or a sort of hooded “Mother Hubbard” made of white sheeting. All the Finns seemed to have a knack of melting into the snow.

A young general traced out with a blunt finger on a big staff map the country between us and Summa, ten miles

farther on. We could not move up to the front line by day. The Russian planes came over too regularly, low and boldly, because there was little fighter opposition and only ground machine-gun fire to fear. The Finns let them pass. To have fired would have revealed their positions.

That afternoon we spent with a battalion which had just come out for rest after eight weeks in the lines. Eight weeks at Summa, with the Russian artillery over beyond, almost hub-to-hub in its firing positions, blasting every day all day, secure from much interference because the Red Air Force had superiority, and because it outranged the deadly accurate Finnish guns. They had had heavy casualties, but they were very cheerful, and relaxed as a very weary man relaxes once the strain is over.

Someone had thrown together a *sauna*, and in relays the men were diving into the belching door of the hut for one of those Finnish steam baths which seem to purge the head while sloughing ten years in age from the body. The officers showed us some superbly made Russian tommy guns they had captured, and their own "machine pistols" which actually were sub-machine guns themselves. They said the Russians had fought very bravely all along the Isthmus, despite appalling losses. Still new divisions kept coming.

The officers said they hoped "those fellows" would be able to hold. "Those fellows" were a battalion of Swedish Finns from the Gulf of Bothnia, who had taken over that morning in the front line. They had never been under fire before. Our men said they would go right back into the battle, tired as they were, if they had to.

"Those fellows" broke next morning under a tank attack supported by a hail of artillery fire, and the Russian breakthrough at Summa became the advance on Viipuri which de-

cided the Finnish-Russian war. The Finns probably did go back into the fight, but the Russian impetus was too great. Lack of adequate reserves, and the utter weariness of a small army forced to fight its heart out day after day against overwhelming numbers, had been the decisive factors.

We had supper in another dugout with a half dozen young officers: black bread, sardines, cheese and cup after cup of scalding tea. There was no alcohol anywhere around. The Finnish army was teetotal at the front.

Enkel acted as interpreter. He spoke perfect English and German, and I complimented him on them.

“Actually, French is my mother language,” he said.

I asked him whether he had been born there.

“No,” he replied, “but my family comes from France.”

I asked him how long the family had been in Finland.

“Two hundred years,” he said. It was typical of a country where the stolid, peasant stock has no talent for assimilation, and still looks on a great portion of its fellow-citizens as foreigners. They reciprocate. I have heard many Finns of Swedish stock talk about “those Finns.”

A low, narrow sledge which was nothing more than a shallow trough on runners took us through the night for seven or eight miles. We sat huddled together behind the driver’s back, moving almost without sound along the narrow tracks while the trees ghosted back past us. It was bitterly cold, but at that it was better than skis, which Enkel had first suggested. The idea of twenty miles on skis through the black woods had not been attractive to one whose most recent activities of that kind had been about 1920, on the gentle, civilized slopes around Stonington, Connecticut, and not very successful at that.

The forest had sprung to life with the darkness. Long

lines of silent sledges loomed up at us out of the darkness, then melted away behind, going back for supplies. Along paths which converged out of the forest, loaded sledges slipped in ahead or behind, going in our direction, and for a while we were part of a column moving up toward the front, with no sign of its passing but a faint jingle from the harness. Then we branched off ourselves, and were alone again.

The sky was brilliantly starlit. The grumble of guns had been slowly swelling until now it was no longer continuous sound, but an interminable beat of explosions. Suddenly one landed in the woods behind us. The trees leapt to life with the flash of the explosion, and the crash came close on its heels. I could hear tree branches falling.

A sentry loomed up from behind a big tree, and we got stiffly off the sledge. He whispered briefly to Enkel, then started off at a fast walk down a dim track in the snow. The stars on the snow gave ample light to walk by. It was a sort of Christmas card landscape, more open than the woods we had gone through before, and thickly drifted.

Then the illusion was shattered. There came a swish through the air which grew louder and louder. The sentry, leading the way, suddenly crouched in the snow, head low. The swish passed overhead, there came the snapping of branches, then a blinding flash and a detonation which seemed to shake both the air and the ground. I didn't know whether to keep my fur cap off my ears, to be able to hear the shells coming, or to keep it pulled down and avoid frost-bite. I solved the problem by watching the sentry, whose head was completely muffled, but who seemed to catch the whine of the coming shell by a sort of sixth sense. When he ducked, I ducked. I discovered later that Tommy Hawkins was watching me with the same idea in mind.

That walk was a strange sort of frozen nightmare: first the completely peaceful pine forest and the deep snow, then the dive into the snow, the flash and the explosion, then another quick move forward until the next six-incher came over. We never discovered how close they were landing. Sometimes they seemed some distance away, and sometimes quite nearby. It was enough for me that the sentry thought it advisable to duck.

The advanced command post, a mile behind Summa, was deep underground, approached through a narrow tunnel in a huge snowdrift. It was a typical “Mannerheim Line” position, not steel and concrete like the forts of western Europe, although the Finns had them too. It was all logs, great, foot-thick peeled tree trunks, then rock and earth, then more long logs on top. It seemed secure against anything but a very heavy bomb.

The colonel in command sat under a hanging gasoline lantern beside a red hot stove. A field telephone was at his elbow, and big-scale maps on the walls. He brought out piping tea, toast, and of all things a big pot of Strasbourg pâté. As we warmed up the whole dugout suddenly shook, and the lantern began swinging wildly. The colonel commented that the Russians seemed to be using eight-inch artillery tonight. Three more landed just afterward, and each time it was as if the whole structure of heavy logs and rock had been lifted a foot or so, and allowed to drop again.

The colonel was very cheerful, but he grew serious when he asked when the men and the planes Finland needed would be coming. The men in the front line, particularly down on the Isthmus where the strain was so relentless, knew very well their chances of holding out alone.

We couldn't go on to Summa that night. The troops up

ahead were still holding, the colonel said, but the barrage was too heavy. If we wanted to wait until the next night, it might be less. Enkel decided we had better go back. It was a fortunate decision. Nobody ever got up to Summa again, and by next night the Russians were behind our command post, manhandling their heavy guns through the snow to get into position for a new attack.

The barrage had lulled as we walked back through the forest, but as we reached the sledge it swelled again, and the crests of the ridges behind us flickered with the quick-fire of the massed batteries. Somewhere overhead a lone plane circled, presumably to spot the bursts against a landmark identifiable in the night.

As we left Viipuri next morning, the first air alarm of the day sounded. I thought of the dog Webb had discovered at the local hotel, so accustomed to war that when the sirens began rising and falling it rose from in front of the fire, looked around disgustedly, and started for the air-raid shelter.

The eastern horizon was growling steadily as the barrage reached its peak. It must have been about the time "those fellows" broke, and a vital part of the Isthmus line with them.

The battle moved closer to Viipuri, and raged along the river which fed Lake Vuoksi; finally it reached a lake which for three days had correspondents wild with the effort to spell it. It was called Aeraepaeajärvi.

For a few days, attention was diverted from the Isthmus, because the army north of Lake Ladoga had cut up and was destroying another Russian division, the Jaroslav, whose battle flag bore a long bayonet thrusting across a map of Finland.

In Helsinki, a few people refused to be diverted. There

were Swedish volunteers on the Salla front, where the Russians had been halted by snow and desperate resistance, but there were not enough to hold once the ground hardened after the spring thaw. There were Canadian and American volunteers, some of them relics of the rum-running days, quartered in a town on the Gulf of Bothnia in a hotel named perchance the Arena; they had established a reputation for toughness which even the tough Finns respected, but there were not enough of them either. There were Gloster Gladiators, and Moranes, and a few American Brewster fighter planes which had been assembled in Sweden and flown in, but likewise there were not nearly enough of them. The people in Helsinki who knew the truth were quite aware that Finland could not continue unless immediate help came. The casualties were mounting too steeply on the Isthmus.

Everyone talked about the army which England and France had offered; some said it was on the way; others knew that neutral Scandinavia would never be able to let it through, and that in any event Germany could not permit an allied force to establish itself on her flank. A few people said Germany had told Finland that in no uncertain terms, and at the same time had hinted that some day the lost country would be regained.

Everyone talked hopefully of the late-winter blizzard “which ought to come any day now,” and which would stop the Russian drive. Twice it started, and each time the snowfall lasted for only a few hours. It had been the coldest winter in memory, but there had been remarkably little snow.

Six of us left Helsinki to see the end of the Jaroslav Division around Syskyjaervi. Five were Americans: Wade Werner of AP, Leland Stowe of the Chicago *Daily News*, Ed

Hartrich of *Columbia Broadcasting*, Virginia Cowles of the *London Sunday Times*, and myself. The sixth was a Frenchman whose name nobody ever discovered. For three weeks he had stood the Finnish climate in a green velour hat, black ear-muffs, a red muffler and some city-bred rubbers. He had been undisguisedly miserable the entire time.

Three of us got on a sleeper in Helsinki, dove into the snow for an air raid only once during the night, and eventually arrived in Pieksamaeki, up the line in the thick woods. There was no sign of the others.

Pieksamaeki was a junction, and as such had gotten its attention. The waiting room on the platform between the tracks had been burnt out, houses nearby had been hit, but the railway was still functioning.

We boarded a troop train for Sortavala. It was filled with men returning to the front from leave, sealed hermetically into a long line of super-hot little cars which jerked over the hills, then stopped, then jerked along again, for sixteen long hours. We had two seats for the three of us. The soldiers slept, mostly; they had been on board for twelve hours or more. When they woke up, we exchanged cigarettes and food. One had some sausage, another bread. Virginia had some odds and ends, and I discovered some chocolate which had been in my knapsack since the flight from Warsaw. Ed and I speculated on the teetotalism of the Finnish army, and finally deferred to it and a limited liquor supply by adjourning to the open platform once in a while for a pull at the bottle. Eventually, someone caught the significance of our disappearing act, and we had company each time.

Most of the time, we could have walked alongside the train. Sometimes it sped a bit on a down grade. Time and again it went even slower for a mile or so, and the snow on

either side of the single track was brown with fresh earth every twenty or thirty yards. The Russian bombers had been along the line, and the tracks had just been laid again. There were a few villages, some of them scarred themselves, and one fairish town where the train stopped for an hour and everyone milled around in a little restaurant room which had cakes and hot tea.

Deep in the night we reached another junction, where the fires were still burning. The switch yard was torn with great holes, and the bent rails stuck grotesquely into the air. The troop train moved off south and east, toward the Isthmus front. Someone showed us the train for Sortavala.

Lee Stowe and Wade Werner had been in a sleeper which was shunted off somewhere short of Pieksamaeki. They arrived at the junction six hours behind us, just in time for the first morning air raid. The Frenchman, who had thriftily bought a third class ticket from Helsinki, had discovered himself sixty miles in the wrong direction. He arrived at Sortavala a full day late, completely disgusted, and determined never to stir out of doors again in Finland.

Syskyjaervi and the front lay forty miles or so to the north-east. When we reached it just after dark, there was a bright moon on the snow. It lit up the rolling white under the sparse pine forest, and the new snow had been just enough to sift over the debris of the division, but not to cover it.

Syskyjaervi was like a dozen other Finnish battlefields. The Russians had struck quickly and powerfully along one usable road through the woods, and before the real snows came. The Finns had stopped the head of the column with mines and artillery. Turning it around had proved impossible, or perhaps the order had been never to turn around. Then the Finnish snipers had chewed away from the shelter of the

trees, cutting the column slowly into *Mottis*, little islands of a thousand or two thousand troops, cut off from one another by the machine guns which raked the road and the silent ski patrols which ruled the forest. The Russians had built crude dugouts, where some had frozen to death. They had tried to turn their tanks into pillboxes. On a few occasions, they had tried to charge the machine guns, and been mowed down in the clearings.

After a while, food had grown short, and they had killed some horses. By that time, nobody could retreat. Cold and the snipers had finally finished them off.

For two or three miles, the drifted road was the junk-yard of an army, guns, caissons, field kitchens, trucks, forlorn tanks, thousands of shell cases, abandoned rifles. Huddled in the snow, half drifted over and so black with the cold that the flesh looked like leather, lay the men. They were not like ordinary dead men on an ordinary battlefield. In the bitter-cold woods and the snow, there was little about them which was human or sad.

On the side roads were other graveyards, where a company or a battalion had been pushed out as a screen and slowly died. We walked on east past the last corpse, and from the hill ahead came scattered rifle shots and a few bursts from a machine gun. A regiment or so of the Jaroslav was still holding out. Some of them must have managed to hang on until they could march out, because it was only two weeks or so before the peace.

When we got back to Helsinki, the Russians had hammered their way into artillery range of Viipuri, and the town had been cleared of civilians. All along the road to the capital families moved west on their sledges, their bedding and their

pots piled about them, or waited in the snow at one side for a truck to pass which had room for a few more. Strung out in long lines, headed toward the Isthmus, went the last reserves of troops, oldish men and youngsters, moving into the defense lines which had been thrown up in the woods.

On my last trip to Viipuri, we stopped just outside town to wait under the trees, because there were too many planes over the road. While we waited, there came a sudden roar, and two stubby little Russian pursuit planes swept over at a couple of hundred feet, raking a branch road with their machine guns. They had spotted some sort of movement on the road, and we were thankful we had not kept going. Then we dashed for the city, heads out the car windows to watch for planes. We saw three in the distance, but they were going the other way.

Fifty degree cold is bad enough to read about. It is not so bad if you are out and active in it. If you sit motionless in a car, it slowly eats into you until anything else unpleasant would be a relief. If all the windows are open, and you must keep your head stuck out at fifty miles an hour, you gradually reach the point where there just never was any heat in the world.

Fortunately that didn't last long; we swung in over the river and stopped by the old castle, which used to be known as “the key to Finland.” The only sign of life was the Finnish flag, which whipped in a stiff breeze from the squat tower.

It was the first time I had ever seen an entire city killed by war. Nothing moving was left but the flag, the thin smoke which still rose from a score of buildings, and a telephone receiver which hung from a window sill at the end of its cord,

swinging slowly in the wind. I went over to it, retrieved the instrument, and tried the exchange. There was still current in the wires, but there was no one at the other end.

Great cascades of debris blocked the streets at a hundred points. In some places there were orderly piles of furniture and lamps and paintings of grandpa, where people had been busy collecting their belongings when word had come they must evacuate immediately. The tall shade trees in the park had been split and twisted by shellfire, and the streetcar wires torn down so that they spiraled along the main street. Some of the buildings had been cut in half—bombs. Some had only a hole three or six or eight feet square in one wall—shells. Some seemed intact, except that there was hardly a pane of glass in town.

It was strange that with cigarettes very short in Helsinki, we could help ourselves in dead Viipuri from the shelves of a wrecked shop. We could have had sewing machines from another, and bathtubs and nuts and bolts from a third, and a scattering of canned goods, although the people had taken away almost everything that was edible. At one spot the street was strewn with paper caps and candy favors and noise-makers, and snap-crackers, all the makings of a child's birthday party which never was held. I think that small, bright-colored bit of wreckage was more impressive than all the debris of adult lives.

Viipuri itself made no sound, but spasmodically, sometimes singly and sometimes three or four in a clump, the Russian shells landed somewhere in the town. They made a sharp, quick noise in the cold air, not like the heavy sound of a bomb. There seemed to be nothing systematic about the artillery fire.

Just before we left, the sirens began to rise and fall, and

we suddenly realized that there were other people somewhere in the town, keeping watch on a high roof, forwarding orders to the tired troops who still stood between Viipuri and the Russians. No planes came within sight. Viipuri apparently was not worth bombing very much, any more.

We stopped for an hour on the north shore of the Bay of Viipuri, where small, desperate units of Finnish troops were guarding against a Russian crossing which might flank both the city and the entire Isthmus line. Their machine guns had already turned the ice of the bay into a frozen graveyard, but the Russians had come very close, and for a few hours had gotten a foothold on land.

Two days later they were across again, and this time they could not be dislodged.

Helsinki still seemed to have little urgency about it, probably because the people in the streets still read about Russian annihilation at Syskyjaervi, the number of Russian planes and tanks destroyed each day, and the help which the allied powers were talking of sending. Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck performed on a back page of the *Helsingin Sanomat*. The agency men still maneuvered for the telephone to get their communiqué out first. At the local movie palace, Ginger Rogers became all involved with an abandoned baby, and on the last Saturday of the war there were the usual brawls and knife fights on the big dance floors.

There were a few signs of tension. The people who ran the press room at the Kaemp were getting more nervous, and snapped back at the correspondents when the correspondents shouted at them. The censorship became very strict. In the esplanade in front of the hotel, workmen began putting up timber and sandbag protective shields for the statues; before they

completed them, they began pulling them down again.

Typically, first news of the peace broke in Stockholm, which all Finns had suspected would do anything to stop war in the north. Stockholm said there was a Finnish delegation in Moscow to negotiate. Stockholm said peace would be the best thing, and talked of a Scandinavian bloc which would cooperate—in the future.

Correspondents learned that the Finnish parliament was hotly debating peace. Everyone in Helsinki said that nothing but the most honorable and generous terms could be accepted, in the light of Finland's magnificent fight. Nobody who had knowledge of the nearly 30,000 dead and the thousands of badly wounded, knew what Finland could do about it if the terms were not generous.

Then Russia's terms became known: Hangoe, the Isthmus, Viipuri, some of the finest forest land, some of the essential electric power and industries. In the shock of frustration and anger, few Finns realized that it was substantially what Russia had wanted at the start.

In six weeks or two months she could have had all Finland. The power of resistance was going faster than the snow would melt; not the spirit, but the young men, and the planes and guns and the bullets for service rifles.

When you examined the Russian peace terms, it seemed strange that they were so moderate. Perhaps it was because Finland's resistance had impressed the Kremlin, and the cost in Russian lives been over-heavy. Perhaps it was because Russia really wanted only what she needed for defense; it would have been better to leave the Germans no near base against Leningrad. Perhaps it was because spring was coming, and nobody could be sure just what Adolf Hitler would do.

CHAPTER 17

THE PASSPORT is stamped in at Stockholm airport March 22, 1940, the beginning of the darkest spring which freedom in Europe had ever known.

No one in Stockholm seemed to realize that. None of us could see clearly what was coming. Stockholm, it seemed to me in the week I spent there, was as blandly unaware of what was going on as a city in the mountains of the moon.

Everyone was tremendously worried about the coal shortage, which was working serious discomfort on householders in the matter of hot water. The Grand Hotel, so popular report had it, was the only place in town where you could get a hot bath every day of the week. To an extent, though, that was not an effect of the war; it had been caused by the severe Baltic freeze, which blocked ship transport from scores of harbors.

The Per Albin Hansson government had steered a very careful course, and managed to stay out of open commitments to Finland. Scandinavian solidarity had been expressed in terms of the hard-working enthusiasts who collected skis and clothes and money for the Finns, or went off themselves to fight, and the common people who contributed what they could in money or extra time at work.

Scandinavian solidarity was about to be put to a sterner test, which a few people recognized to be imminent but the government would manage to ignore. I don't pretend that the Swedes I talked to in that week at the Grand Hotel and the Opera Restaurant and the Cecil were typical of Sweden. I am sure that many Swedes, like the farmers and woodsmen of Jaemtland, were tough and aggressive. With a few notable exceptions, it seemed to me the men and women with whom I talked in Stockholm had grown soft under the pleasant influence of too many years of peace and prosperity, and a social system which had made Sweden the closest thing to the ideal society I had ever encountered.

Their attitude was summed up very comfortably by one man who remarked, "How fine it is that peace has returned to the north."

I didn't foresee the invasion of Denmark and Norway, which was two weeks off. It did occur to me that Adolf Hitler had always been a man of very far-reaching ideas; and I remembered the map which Rosenberg's office had prepared, showing a "Nordic Europe" stretching from the North Cape into upper Italy, presumably ranking the Scandinavians as a sort of second-rate version of the *Herrenvolk*, and one degree higher than the slave peoples who would be ruled by its sword.

Perhaps because it was closer to the pulsating military power of the Third Reich, Copenhagen seemed to be much more aware of the great spring surge which was coming. Probably there were very few Danes who expected to be engulfed themselves. The intended victims seemed never to. But Denmark was completely defenseless, and all intelligent

Danes had long since become reconciled to the idea that if Hitler ever wanted them, he would take them.

The Danes, those I knew, had no more desire than the Norwegians to become second-class *Herrenvolk*. But tragically, they could be overrun so quickly that the world would not have time to realize that they wanted to fight against it.

Small things stay in mind from that spring of 1940. One of them is a movie which was playing in the center of Copenhagen. It was called “Hollywood Cavalcade,” and in it the Keystone Cops did a chase and Buster Keaton executed a spectacular two-cushion bank shot with a custard pie. Since the time I watched the filming of a comedy based on pastry and property flowerpots, on a front lawn in Bronxville, N.Y., the summer before the last armistice, I have been an abject admirer of all pie throwers. It was a perfect antidote to war.

Spring had brought more uncertainty to Holland and Belgium; you could sense that from an overnight stay. In London, someone had just said for the nineteenth time that “Hitler has missed the bus” by not attacking in the fall of 1939, when no one was ready.

The day I reached London, mines were laid in Norwegian waters by the British navy. Hitler’s warships and transports were already on their way up the Great Belt through the Danish islands, and in Narvik and other Norwegian harbors there were freighters with armed men waiting under the hatch covers.

The next day, Denmark was overrun, and the invasion of Norway began. I remember that everyone I talked to, from the clerks at the hotel to the man who issued my exit visa for the Balkans, was happy that Hitler had come out into the

open and taken the offensive. Everyone, myself included, was quite convinced that the British navy could see to it that few troops ever reached Norway; Britain and France would soon land a strong force, and drive the Germans out. It was a good theory, which fell down only because it neglected air power, which wins modern battles, and the fact that Germany had all the airdromes on which fighter planes could be based. She also had the initiative, and the shock troops to exploit it.

By the time I left for the Balkans, three days later, it was obvious even to the whuffers and puffers in Whitehall that the Germans were getting strong reinforcements into Norway to fill out the skeleton force which had invaded it, and that she probably would be quite able to keep pushing in more men and more guns.

It was going to be a hard fight; but everyone was still optimistic—more from relief over the end of the "sitzkrieg," than from any logic.

A man at the table in the diner, on the Simplon-Orient out of Paris, told me that an allied force was about to sail for Norway, or perhaps was already en route. It all sounded very hopeful, but somehow, Norway did not look like Hitler's effort for the year.

The Simplon-Orient Express left Paris relatively above suspicion. Everyone aboard was a courier or a diplomat or a solid businessman off to impress the Balkans. By the time it had crossed the Swiss frontier at Vallorbe and skirted the high mountains down to Lausanne, the taint had begun to set in.

In the dining car at breakfast, there were a few men in badly cut suits. The suits seemed to be bulky and stiff, with a definite tinge of wood pulp or other *ersatz* to them. The men

in the suits had a tinge of Gestapo, or “Economic Mission,” or whatever it might be called.

These individuals, who were always perfectly correct in their behavior, were a source of no end of suspicion to the passengers who had started with the train, and who therefore were *simon-pure*.

The train seemed to change its character very little in Italy, where everyone got out onto the platform at each stop and strode up and down very purposefully. There were always a few bumptious little officers on the platform, but the Italians didn't seem to be going anywhere. More or less in line with their politics, no doubt.

The Simplon-Orient became a sort of cross-country free-for-all somewhere in Jugoslavia, where the German and French sections were coupled together, and became one long trainload of hush-hush and who's-that. Allies stumbled along the corridors, en route to the diner, apologizing with great care each time they squeezed past the enemy, then wondering whether it wouldn't have been better to have the attendant lock their compartment doors. Enemies ate quietly in the diner, with that brand of intent vagueness which descends on any German when he is trying to tune in to a conversation he feels he ought to overhear.

By the time the train reached Bucharest, it was practically no transition at all to the phony intrigues of the Athenée Palace bar.

I branched from the main line before Bucharest, that trip, and dropped off the train in Belgrade. Stoyadinovic, the ex-premier, who classed as pro-German, had just been arrested. There had been raids on a good many unobtrusive houses which were suspect as centers of German propaganda.

People were talking about a German fifth column, of Croats or German-blooded Yugoslavs, which was supposed to be organizing for the day when Hitler would turn south.

I spent one long, warm afternoon on the hill which commands Belgrade and the Danube, lying in the grass in the sun. Behind us was the German war cemetery—all the Heinrich Schmidts and Walther Lehmanns who had died storming the city in the last war. The man who had driven me up there, and who is still in Yugoslavia and still fighting, talked of the fly-fishing you can get back in the mountains, and only occasionally about the war.

"Fish are pleasant to talk of," he said, "and the war will be very unpleasant. There is nothing a country like ours can do but fight its best when the time comes, and that we will always do. Meanwhile, I intend to do all the fishing I can, because that is one way to forget not only Adolf Hitler but even the Croat question."

Even the Croat question. . . .

It was a question of fundamental importance to the Croats, and to all Serbs who were trying to make Yugoslavia a going concern. It seemed hardly the sort of thing to worry very much about, at a time when Herr Hitler was threatening to overrun Europe. He would wipe out all minorities problems and artificial borders and ancient hatreds, in one stroke which would beautifully simplify everything, leaving just the *Herrenvolk* and the creatures who produced for it. But on second thought, the Croat question, like the Slovakian and Ukrainian before it and the Transylvanian to follow, was very important because by keeping it alive the Nazis fostered decay on which they could fatten themselves when they got around to it.

There was another question which people talked about a

lot in Jugoslavia that spring. That was pan-Slavism. “Uncle Ivan,” the friendly Russian who was a brother to all the lesser Slavs, had been a long time banished from the western Balkans, but gradually he was coming back. There was much talk in Belgrade of the rapprochement with the Soviet Union which would soon take place. Serbs with a good weather eye had an uneasy feeling that however quickly Uncle Ivan might come, Uncle Adolf would probably get there first.

I dropped down the Danube by boat on a clear, black night. When morning came we were just plunging into the mountain gorge which gradually torments the river into a swift flood and sends it rushing through the Iron Gate into the flat lands of Rumania and the Black Sea.

Tied up by the bank, above and below the Gate, were scores of long, low barges. Most of them flew the swastika; a few were in British or French charter, and carried the Tricolor or the Union Jack. An off-duty river pilot who stood beside me on the top deck said in an undertone that these were supposedly full of cement and explosives, and would be used when the time came in an allied attempt to block the Danube. Where the quick water foams over great rocks in the rapids of the Iron Gate, there is a narrow ship canal, which could be stopped tight with a few sunken barges.

At the Iron Gate, the mountains press close on either side. Just below it, they flatten out. On the left bank lay Turn Severin, the Rumanian port of entry, looking deceptively clean and white from the river. Against the bluff on the right—the Jugoslav—bank were tied two large Danube passenger boats which even at a distance had something disheveled and discouraged about them. Above them at the top of the bank, there seemed to be a football game in progress. By the water’s edge, for hundreds of yards in every

direction, a great assortment of washing lay drying in the sun.

The river pilot told me the story of the two ships, one of which he had piloted down river himself, and of the debris of Hitler Europe which they carried. More than a year before the people had been loaded aboard, Jews from Bratislava, most of them. They had been told to get out, anywhere; nowhere were they wanted.

One ship had picked up a few more from a sandbank in the Danube, where some humorous Stormtroopers had marooned them. There had been no chance of landing in Hungary. Palestine had put a ban on immigration, and all the countries in between had their own problems, and wanted no Jews. Finally Yugoslavia had given them a stretch of river bank, and there they had remained, living and dying and giving birth on board the two ships, fed and covered by charity and permitted a game of football or some laundering ashore.

Finally the Nazis caught up with them there, again. If they were lucky, they were forced to move on again. The chances are that with all Europe at war and the little niceties of human conduct cast aside, they were not fortunate enough for that. Probably they were pressed into work gangs to build military highways or hew timber. Or perhaps they were driven on, and were part of that shipload of refugee Jews which struck a mine in the Black Sea, near the Turkish coast, and was lost almost to a man.

My last stay in Bucharest was notable for three things. The first of them was the feeling of shamed frustration which slowly enveloped the allied colony as the news from Norway got worse. At the start, it had been the same in Bucharest as in London. The Englishmen in the bar at the Athenée Palace had congratulated one another, and dug one another in the

ribs when a German entered the room. By the time I arrived, everyone was admitting that the news was bad, but that without doubt the Germans could not keep supplying their troops indefinitely.

Sam Brewer of the *Chicago Tribune*, who had been a roommate of mine at Yale, had a radio. Three times a day or so, Sonia Tomara, and Walter Duranty and I gathered around to listen to the B.B.C. We also tuned in to the German programs, and for a while we refused to believe anything said in them. Slowly, as the B.B.C. confirmed each budget of bad news two or three days later, we began to realize that the *Deutschlandsender* was speaking the truth, because its side was winning and it could afford to. After a week or so, we kept listening more out of habit than anything else.

The second event was my feud with whoever the Propaganda Minister was at that moment. The minister the fall before had been a small, dapper gentleman who held long, bland press conferences in flawless French, and who once had cut short a private interview by asking me if I liked nude women, then rushed me off to watch him censor a very tame Balkan leg show—a sort of ruritanian Floradora. By the spring of 1940, the minister was an ex-professor, whose French was bad and whose ideas of news ethics were worse.

What troubled the minister was a “think piece” I had turned out a day or so before, one of those longish stories which in an English paper might commence, “It would be safe to assume . . . ,” in an American paper, “Political circles felt tonight . . . ,” and which in either would have paid due attention to the pros without under any circumstances neglecting the cons.

Think pieces are written either when there is an important news situation which requires explaining or, sometimes, when

there has been no development for days and the correspondent finally feels the urge to justify his existence. They are the result of observation, conversation and background information. They serve a definite purpose, but they are exactly the sort of thing to infuriate a Balkan propaganda minister.

In the story in question, I had tossed in an observation which had been made so often that it hardly rated the cable tolls to carry it to America: that Rumania was in no position, morally, economically or politically, to face an attack from any first-rate power. When I was shown into the minister's office, a cable from somewhere lay on his desk. It was a tale of woe which treated the sins of a whole series of correspondents, but mine was the only one on that particular occasion which had merited the minister's own red pencil.

"Did you send this?" he asked.

I told him I had.

"Then you will return to your hotel, and deny it," he said.

I said the passage in question represented not only my opinion, but that of every other foreigner I had spoken to in Bucharest.

"Nevertheless, you must deny it."

I told him it also represented the opinion of almost every Rumanian I had met, and that I certainly did not intend to deny my own story.

"You don't understand," he said. "You must deny it, or you will be expelled from Rumania."

I suggested that, if the story merited denial, the Rumanian Propaganda Ministry might arrange a trip for me to various frontier areas, to army training centers, and to arms factories. If thereafter I could interview the Chief of Staff, I should be glad to quote his views on the subject.

“First you will deny the story,” said the minister, who didn’t seem to have the same taste in leg opera. “Within twenty-four hours, you will inform me you have done so. Then we will see about the trip.” We left the matter at that.

I did nothing about it the next day, chiefly because I didn’t intend to, but at least partly on the theory that so many other sins would have been committed by other people that my own might gradually pale.

By the day after, it made no difference, anyway. That was the day of the third event, King Carol’s spring review. It was May 10, 1940.

Two very fine grandstands had been erected for the parade. They flanked a broad runway across the square in front of the palace. Parades are always pretty good news stories, particularly Balkan parades which are staged with Hitler pawing tentatively at the doorstep. By the time King Carol’s parade started, it was worth about as much in column space as the square egg which is always laid by someone’s hen, somewhere, every summer, or the “Nonagenarian Lays Health to Tobacco and Corn Whisky” item.

The Rumanian army put on a good show. There were tanks, and motorized infantry, and modern artillery and searchlights and anti-aircraft. They rolled through the square in closed line. I stood in the grandstand for lesser fry with Merrill Mueller, of INS, and both of us wished we were back in Sam Brewer’s room at the radio. Rudolf, the bar waiter, had promised to have all the latest news waiting when the parade was over. Meanwhile we watched a small country’s show of strength paraded, and the world’s greatest military machine was striking for the first time in its full force, into nerve-racked Belgium and complacent Holland.

My marching orders came the next day. I was to get to

Switzerland as fast as possible, because Germany might strike at the south end of the Maginot Line, to outflank Belfort and pour heavy divisions into central France.

The usual secret conversations were going on behind the usual pillars in the lobby when I left the Athenée Palace; a German banker who used to have a large fund of anti-Nazi jokes was checking in at the desk; the gray car was waiting outside for our journalistic colleague, Frau von Kohler, who had been arrested a few days before for promiscuous travel without permission, and released when her legation suddenly announced that her status was really diplomatic.

The Swiss, those most hospitable people, had become suspicious of all foreigners. Getting a visa was a matter of much form-filling and telegraphy. That stopped me in Italy for a few days, during the period when everyone was watching the communiqués to discover when the "historic mission" could be launched.

The newspapers beat their breasts in fine unison, and talked darkly of the point when Italy's patience would have been tried too sorely. The party hacks drummed up a grand fake frenzy. It was irresistibly like a small man on the edge of a saloon brawl who hefts a beer bottle and wonders whether to take a crack at the nearest head.

My first experience in Italian war feeling came the morning after my arrival in Milan. I was sitting outside a small café on the Cathedral Square, reading Sparrow Robertson's sports column in the *Paris Herald*, when the street to my left erupted.

Out into the square poured a few hundred assorted demonstrators. The leader, who must have been nearly nineteen, wore a black shirt and carried an out-sized Italian flag, which he managed to keep draped over one shoulder in

bright, dramatic folds. He sprang onto the base of a massive group of statuary and began making a speech.

Most of the next in line carried placards and smaller flags. They crowded around the pedestal and made loud noises. The twelve- and fourteen-year-olds stood on the outskirts and howled gleefully. It was the sort of demonstration anyone would join in at fourteen, or even fifteen.

Then an undersized official in tasseled cap, party shirt and bright boots hove into sight. He led the procession off, marching with a walk usually associated with aldermen and pigeons. Traffic in the square began returning to normal. I followed the procession, drawn by the noise, as always I used to be, by the calliope at the tail end of a circus parade.

My knowledge of Italian is based on French, plus a few remnants of Latin of “*tuba, tubae, tubae, tubam, tuba*” caliber. It was just about adequate to handle the placards, which ranged from “Nizza, Corsica, Tunisia,” or what might be called the classic school, to a few minor masterpieces of subway toilet humor. There was even one comparatively mild crack at the United States, something to do with moneybags, which left me vaguely disappointed because it seemed to lack all good, robust, violent feeling.

At one intersection, the procession split up. A few of them dashed off down a side street and threw a half dozen righteous bricks through the windows of the Belgian consulate; Belgium, no doubt, had tried Italy’s good nature beyond endurance, and perhaps had threatened to invade her. The rest of them swarmed on ahead, and reached a large building with a convenient balcony.

The party dignitary disappeared, then reappeared up above, thrust his chest and his chin over the balcony railing, and spoke. I began paying attention to the people who had

been trying to go about their business in the street, the ones who had something to do that day. It had struck me all along the way that nobody on the sidewalks ever joined the procession. They just moved out of the way as its fringes swept along the curb, then walked on.

Presumably from tact or expediency, those who were caught with me on the sidewalk opposite the balcony had halted when the speech began. They did not cheer or yell "Duce," not one of them. I watched them, the women and the men; there was nothing to stamp them as anti-Fascist; probably they weren't; they showed about as much interest in the proceedings as a man caught in the ladies' jam judging at a county fair.

By the time the second functionary had started the second speech, the man next to me took off his hat, scratched his head, replaced his hat and moved off. I followed.

In Rome, it was more of the same thing, but with higher and somehow more genuine feeling. Englishmen had a few unpleasant encounters in the streets at night with party ragmuffins; so did a few Americans like John Whittaker of the *Chicago Daily News*, and Reynolds and Eleanor Packard, of UP. All escaped more or less disheveled. A "spontaneous demonstration" was arranged for one evening in front of the Palazzo Venezia. I was having dinner on the edge of an old square a couple of blocks away with Virgil Pinkley, who had just come in from America, but both of us were so bored with the whole phony business that we stayed where we were and had some more coffee. After a half hour or so, during which waves of sound had beaten through the old streets, the mob demonstrators streamed back through our square again, and gradually broke up into the usual evening strollers in clumps of two and three.

The papers were full of German successes: the Albert Canal crossed, Holland crushed, Sedan broken, the corridor to the sea opened up. The news was so incredibly bad that at first I refused to believe it, and assured myself that it must be the lopsidedness of the Italian press. Unfortunately, the news coming into the UP office was no better, and we could find nothing comforting in the dull British broadcasts we picked up at a radio in the hotel.

Dorothy Oechsner, down from Berlin for a breather, left on the train for the Brenner and Innsbruck with dozens of cakes of soap, a half hundred assorted small purchases, and twenty-one pairs of shoes ranging from baby's booties to galoshes, bought on order for foreign friends in Berlin. The platform was full of soldiers off to rejoin their regiments. John Whittaker, who had gone with me to see Dorothy off, remarked that “any day, now, Musso will talk himself into saving the war for Hitler.” At the hotel, a message was waiting for me, changing my orders from Zurich to London, where I was to pick up credentials and a uniform and go out to France with the British Expeditionary Force.

At Modane, on the Italo-French frontier, the icy peaks gleamed dimly in the darkness high above the station. I strolled up and down with a French officer from Lyons. He had been at Modane for months, waiting for something to happen. He was bitterly depressed.

“France is falling to pieces up north,” he said, “and we sit here with nothing to do but clean our guns and wish the Italians would attack. At least, then, we would be fighting.”

I still was unable fully to grasp his depression. Not until I reached Paris next morning. The station was full of refugees from the north, Belgians mostly but including a few from

Lille and Arras and Amiens. Thousands of them were passing through the outskirts toward the south in automobiles, carts and afoot. They were despondent, hungry, and utterly weary. Some carried bundles, and some had thrown them away. A few of them were wounded. Most of these forerunners had escaped the bombs and machine guns, and were stamped not with blood but with that dazed refugee look which is sometimes harder to look at than wounds.

Weygand had been called to the supreme command early that morning, May 22, 1940. Everyone “hoped” that the Somme could be held. Some people talked of a drive from the south which Weygand would order, cutting through that narrow German corridor which was strangling the B.E.F. and the French and the Belgians in the north. It seemed entirely feasible, but it was very hard to believe in it on that depressed morning in Paris.

The refugee stream continued all day through the outskirts, and one of the big movie palaces on the Grands Boulevards was showing *You Can't Take It With You*. It was more nearly normal in the center of town, because the cafés were full and the sun beat down on them and there were still that morning's British papers on sale at the curbstone. I had lunch with H. R. Knickerbocker and Edgar Mowrer, of the Chicago *Daily News*, and discovered they were laying plans for a quick getaway: all the business of full gasoline tanks, packed bags and a back road route which should keep them clear of the refugee stream. That depressed me all over again. Then Knick and I sat for a half hour in the sun on the Champs Elysées, and I felt better.

I suspect most of the people in Paris were like myself, and alternated between hope and depression with the atmos-

phere and surroundings of the moment. I know I still had no conception of the hopeless chaos at the front, and the divisions which ran away, and the rusty guns and the bad rations and outworn tactics. Because I had no idea, it was impossible completely to believe the bad news.

It was impossible to get to London by air; there were too many official passengers back and forth. I finally booked via St. Malo–Southampton, and jammed my way aboard a refugee train whose passengers were not harried and weary and depressed, but quite genteel and not unduly worried by anything save lost luncheon hampers, restless children and the fact that we were forced to ride eight to a first class compartment.

Most of the trainload were British, with a scattering from the Continent. My compartment was typical. It included a drunken Irishman, a retired general, the French wife of a Scots officer, her small and very active daughter, a middle-aged Englishwoman and two others who must have kept very quiet, because they have lost all identity in my mind.

The Irishman seemed to have a more-than-adequate supply of whisky, which he extracted when needed from a paper hatbox, about all the luggage he had. He slept heavily in between.

The general had been routed by the sudden offensive out of his retreat in Sorrento, or somewhere nearby. He had arrived at the train early, wedged himself into a seat by the window, tilted his jaunty black homburg over his nose, and gone to sleep. When the train started, he dove into a large hamper, producing successively a bottle of sherry, some red wine, some white, a flask of whisky and one of brandy, and a great medley of cold chicken, ham, pâté de Strasbourg and

fresh fruit. The railroad had warned everyone to take food enough for two days, and the general might easily have stood a siege.

The Frenchwoman was querulous, because she didn't want to leave France, was sure she would not like living with her husband's parents in England, and definitely offended at all the inconvenience of travel without the child's nurse. The general chivalrously took her in charge, explaining at some length that there was nothing to worry about. He told long stories to the child, who listened politely. It developed that he had been with Kitchener at Khartoum.

The lone Englishwoman had a small package of food, a large number of small parcels which kept tumbling from the luggage rack, and a worried look. The look was explained later at St. Malo, where the French customs discovered her trying to smuggle a great wad of francs out of the country. She talked in a high, complaining voice, sometimes to the general and sometimes to the whole compartment.

I was traveling with a typewriter, two suitcases and a knapsack, none of which would fit on the piled luggage racks, plus a few bottles of beer and some huge sandwiches picked up at the Montparnasse station. I must have looked very enviously at the general's collation, because the Irishman offered me some whisky. That drew me a leg of chicken from the general, who assumed I was going "home" to enlist. I told him I was American. He considered for a moment, then remarked cheerfully that it made little difference; America would be in the war any moment, anyway.

In the corridor outside, I bumped into Margaret Gilruth of the Melbourne *Herald*, whom I had last seen at some pep meeting or other at the 1938 Nazi convention in Nuremberg. She had just come down from Reims, where she had been

with the R.A.F. headquarters when the German offensive began. As she started off on the story of the woefully small allied air force, the swarms of dive bombers from the north, and the blindness and demoralization of the French army, I began to realize for the first time how bad things were. From the compartment door behind us came the voice of the general, booming on cheerfully about the fight left in the French, and the blockade, and all the planes which were coming across the Atlantic. The general said “the Hun” was overreaching himself, and that he must be having “a perfect devil of a time” with his communications.

Gilly told the story of an unsung French hero named “Uncle Pop-Pop,” a gardener on the outskirts of Reims who was old and considered unfit for the army, but who was determined somehow to have his crack at the foe.

“Uncle Pop-Pop,” early in the war, had found himself a world war machine gun and a belt of ammunition. Why the machine gun was not still in the service of the French army is a little unclear, in the light of subsequent revelations about its standards of equipment. At any rate, “Uncle Pop-Pop” bought it, cleaned and polished it, set it up in his garden on a home-made anti-aircraft mount, and earned his nickname by announcing to his neighbors that he would knock down any German who came within his vision.

Everyone was highly amused at the one-man anti-aircraft battery, but “Uncle Pop-Pop” stuck to his gun. On the morning of May 10, his chance came. Perhaps nobody but a gardener was up as early that morning as the Messerschmitt came, streaking low over the trees through the outskirts of town. It was unchallenged as it banked sharply and started back for the Reich. Then it whined back fast over the edge of town, and listeners heard a ragged, slightly asthmatic

burst from a machine gun. The plane shuddered, then dove and crashed. "Uncle Pop-Pop" had been on duty. I suppose the story lingers in mind because there were so few things pleasant to think about, during that May of 1940.

The train passed quickly down into Brittany, past old, gray churches and sunny hills, and an occasional drab siding where a white hospital train was at halt or troops in British battledress lay in the grass waiting for transport. We thought it might mean big British reserves moving up toward the Seine and Somme; the men were just half-trained, untried, semi-equipped troops from the line of communications, being brought up to bolster a hopeless front where they later fought very bravely and died like veterans.

Just outside St. Malo, the corridors were invaded by a dozen or two British non-coms, who made everyone shut the windows and pull the curtains. The Frenchwoman became petulant, and told the general she thought he ought to use his authority to get them opened again.

The general called the sergeant, and started in.

"See here, sergeant," he began, "I'm an old soldier, myself . . ."

"Sorry, sir, but it's orders," the sergeant replied. He knew what was coming.

The general turned to consoling the Frenchwoman.

"After all, it's war," he said, "and we are all soldiers in a sense. No doubt they have good reason. No doubt there are fortifications which should not be seen by unauthorized eyes." He thought a moment, then brightened and went on: "After all, we must remember that these regulations are not meant for us, but for the scallawags in Third Class."

He looked darkly at the Irishman, who had gone back to sleep and presumably was uninterested in anything that

lay outside the window, but who apparently was suspect of being a scallawag with a third class ticket, traveling against all law and tradition in First Class.

We were permitted to raise the curtains after dark, when the train came to rest on the quay, but we could not leave the train or the immediate quayside. We slept aboard all night, and at dawn I stumbled out for some air and bumped into Joe Ullman, who was very American and very parched. Joe and I had shared beer on the train the night before, and now made common cause for coffee. Together we found the admiral.

The admiral ran a small putt-putt boat around the harbor for a living, directing ships through the sea lock, tugging hawsers to the shore, and so on. What mattered at the moment was that he knew where he could get us some coffee. He disappeared into the darkness and came back ten minutes later with a quart of it and a bottle of raw Breton brandy which he had bought with the spare change as an afterthought. He also brought a thirst, and the three of us passed the two bottles back and forth and watched the black harbor slowly grow light and take shape. Then we gave the admiral the rest of the brandy, and he went off to work.

Behind us were the high, gray walls of the old town, with the steep roofs rising above them. Smoke was spiraling up from a few chimneys. Down the quay lay a dingy little coastal freighter, with various bits of laundry strung from the rigging. Beyond it was the St. Malo fishing fleet, nets strung up to dry, and alongside one pier a half dozen modern steam trawlers which flew the Belgian flag. They were refugees from the Nazi advance, too, but they might just as well have been there on a peacetime Sunday morning. There was nothing in the whole picture to suggest war.

Then the sea lock opened, and another little freighter nosed its way into the harbor. Its decks were packed with people to a point reminiscent of the excursion boats which put out from Southampton in normal summers for weekend round trips to the Channel Islands and St. Malo. It too flew the Belgian flag.

The boat drew alongside, and the faces which looked down at us over the rusty bulwark had the same look of shock and despair which had stamped the men and women on the road south from Warsaw, the Chinese at Jessfield Park and the crowds at the Gare de Lyons. A gangplank was slung, and they began to come down, lugging whatever they had with them, babies, birdcages, and always bedding.

One woman carried an ormolu lamp, and nothing else. A half dozen people had small, nondescript dogs. A couple had mantelpiece clocks. There was one sewing machine, and scores of bicycles. It struck me that refugees everywhere had one thing in common: when the armies threatened to overrun them, they first snatched up their quilts, their blankets and a pillow or two, next some completely useless object which often had little value and always would be a nuisance on the refugee road, but which would act as a link with the old life war had smashed. If something had to be discarded on the way, it was often the bedding that went first.

A freckled-faced kid with red hair slung his bicycle down from his shoulder and dumped it on the quay beside us. He grinned and said “whew.” He looked so American that Joe and I both said hello. He answered in English.

He said his name was Joe, too, “just call me Belgian Joe.” His family had lived in Brussels. Somewhere south of the city, on the flight to the safety which was supposed to lie

in France, he had lost them. He had gone on alone on his bicycle, cutting back when it was necessary to avoid the German columns. He had survived machine gunning on the north French roads; he said it wasn't very hard if you listened carefully and dove for the ditch the moment you heard the planes coming.

He had boarded the ship at Calais, the day before the Germans arrived. He had hoped it was going across to England, but instead it had crept down the French coast, anchoring for hours on end from fright or indecision, then crawling a few miles ahead. During the daylight hours everyone was kept below the hatches, for fear of German planes. Joe said the ship had twice been machine gunned, but fortunately in each case the plane had used up all its bombs and could not sink her.

Now he wanted somehow to get to England and join the R.A.F. He said he was big for sixteen. It looked like a good investment to Joe Ullman and me, and we gave him ten dollars with strict instructions not to use it on food—the local refugee committee would feed him—but to bribe his way aboard a fishing boat if necessary. A couple of five dollar bills could do wonders in France, that spring.

Six weeks later, when the Germans had all of Brittany and were opening the great air onslaught on England itself, Joe appeared in London. The ten dollars had worked.

Except for the refugees, St. Malo might have been at the height of the tourist season. The English and Americans waiting there for a boat had plenty of money, most of them. They took carriages around the old town, climbed the walls, went swimming, or drove off to Mont-Saint-Michel up the coast. The general stayed close to the hotel, whose lobster he pronounced excellent. Gilly found a hole in the wall opening

off the little round fish market. It sold oysters fresh from the sea each morning, and great bowls of *moules marinières*, and there was a racy peasant wine from Anjou to go with them. An old woman just outside the door opened the oysters, a dozen a minute, as you ordered them, and shouted comments on life and the war at a friend in a fish stall across the market.

There were no radios around the fish market, which was one recommendation. Everywhere else in town, loudspeakers blared out the latest news bulletins, and the news was all bad.

The boat arrived from England after two days. In peacetime it had been on the Dover-Ostend run, and there were still colored prints in the salon advertising the Ardennes and Waterloo and Le Touquet. Just before dark it set off, and the admiral saw it safely into the sea lock from the helm of his putt-putt. A destroyer picked us up, a mile or so offshore.

There were six or eight hundred people aboard, and we decided to sleep on the boat deck, where there would be air. By the time it began to rain, heavily and persistently, there wasn't an inch of space inside. But at least the rain meant bad visibility for submarines, and no bombing. Damp and bedraggled, the boatload was dumped ashore at Southampton next morning.

CHAPTER 18

THE ENTRY stamp at Southampton reads May 28, 1940, which is the day King Leopold and his Belgians surrendered. The evacuation from Dunkirk began next day. London was in a mood of bitter depression. Churchill had made the first of his great bellicose speeches as Prime Minister, and it was a lift to the spirit to have a fighter at the helm after years of fuddy-duddyism. But the fires which raged all night at Dunkirk, in sight of the British coast, were a funeral pyre to hopes which had risen high all winter. To the average Englishman the army was lost, and the French would have to hold until more men could be armed and sent.

Then the mood changed, as word filtered through of the magnificent rear-guard action, the R.A.F.'s first big protective job, the rag-tag fleet of motorboats and pleasure steamers, and the fog which made the last two days of evacuation possible. Then most of England awakened to the fact that the army was not lost, and that sheer guts was beating the Wehrmacht with all its tanks and dive bombers. The men were already ashore at Dover, thousands strong, and the endless line of trains was creeping into London, then out to the west and the north. By the time the last one-lung motor-

boat had brought the last man off the beach, disaster had come dangerously close to victory in the mind of the man in the pub. He egged on British seapower, and suddenly started talking again about how France would hold, too, and "the Hun" be stopped short in his tracks.

Actually things couldn't have been worse. To all practical purposes, England was left without a heavy gun, without a tank, without a single unit fully equipped and ready for active service. Her only fire-tested troops were the men who had been through the hell of Flanders, who had fought well and bravely and been overrun through no fault of their own, who were bitter at the R.A.F. for never appearing in the skies, at the men who had sent them out without adequate antitank and anti-aircraft weapons, at the allies who had let them down everywhere the Germans attacked in force. And these men were no longer cohesive units; they would need re-forming, re-enforcement, and re-equipping with weapons which simply weren't there. The Navy was facing Hitler's first serious submarine offensive. The R.A.F. had blooded itself properly at Dunkirk, and had begun to drop a few plane-loads of bombs at night on Germany; but it was still in the main untried, and it was desperately outnumbered. Across the Channel France was falling to pieces at a rate nobody in England could possibly grasp. Fresh from France myself, I had not grasped it either.

But the shock of Dunkirk had one great effect. For the first time England became thoroughly scared, and then fighting mad. There was a stir you could sense in the buses and on the streets. People stopped talking almost affectionately about "Jerry," and reverted to a proper and sincere hatred of Germany and all its works. They began to realize that they had a colossal job on their hands to defeat Hitler's military

machine. Even then they did not realize that there was no glorious offensive in prospect, and that the job to be done was a matter of bitter, desperate defensive. That came a little later. But they had gone a considerable distance in the right direction.

Meanwhile the Germans caught themselves a moment, organized, and crashed into the French and British lines along the Somme. For a day or two it almost seemed that the French were doing better. Then came more falling back, more “rectification of lines,” more “took up prepared positions.” A bridgehead was forced, and with no air force and no modern tank army to throw against it, there was no way it could be retaken. Or the panzer divisions lanced through the allied lines, and because the old theory of war said you must retire when your flanks were turned, retreat was ordered; and the mass of the French army became so many thousand confused men, always falling back from a foe they seldom saw, without proper weapons, often without food, and above all without direction.

In order to get credentials to the British Expeditionary Force, or the remnant of it which had been left below the break-through to the Channel ports, and was still fighting, I had to make my first excursion into the War Office in Whitehall. It was a place of bewildered bustle and of cavernous, dingy corridors, countless small, ugly offices, and enough officers to run an army corps from the ground up. Vague figures caromed nervously off one another in the half light inside the building, and darted off into the murk of the poorly lighted walls.

Joining the B.E.F. involved the acquisition of a uniform, cap-à-pie, a regulation tin hat and gas mask, together with a large number of complicated instructions. The uniform was

technically officer's dress without the insignia, and with leather buttons instead of bright brass ones. The cap bore a large “C” in gold thread, and the words “War Correspondent” in gold letters on green felt were worn on the shoulder tabs. There were also armbands in vertical black and white stripes with the word “Press” in red letters on them. Nobody ever wore the armbands.

We of the press unit, known as “P.R.3,” started for France for the last time on June 10, 1940, from Southampton. I remember telling Harry Flory on the platform at Waterloo Station that probably I should be seeing him again in six weeks or so. I hardly believed it, because somehow it was impossible to imagine that France would not manage another stand like the last war's. Actually I was back a week later.

The last trip to France is a blank in the passport because we landed at Cherbourg by the simple process of stepping ashore, and left from Brest six days later, when nobody seemed to care whether we stayed or not.

We entered Cherbourg harbor in the early evening. The next morning we started for Le Mans in a long convoy of small cars, an officer, two correspondents and a driver to each. I shared a back seat with Drew Middleton of AP. Drew had been through the Low Countries phase of the campaign, and had been evacuated from Boulogne after losing the statutory amount of baggage in Arras. He had come out for the next, or death rattle, phase, with what he could carry in one ditty bag and a firm faith in “Mac” to get him out when the time came.

“Mac,” Lieutenant Colonel MacCormack, was commander of the unit in the field. He was little more than five feet tall,

but equal to a dozen run-of-the-mine brigadiers in the small matter of getting what he wanted, when he wanted it, and more or less in the way he wanted it done. In accomplishing this feat, which was somewhat rare in those days, “Mac” relied partly on Irish quick-wittedness, partly on a genius for wangling which would have done credit to a Tammany district boss, and partly on the cooperation of a redoubtable major named Flood, who saw eye to eye with him in all things.

“Mac” and “Floodie” took over in Cherbourg, and from then on P.R.3 rolled through the chaos of the French breakup with no hitches, no inconvenience beyond a couple of missed meals, and no troubles save a sprained ankle, a few headaches, and a remarkably small amount of lost baggage.

We lunched halfway to Le Mans, along a road which was deserted except for farm carts. Thereafter we passed a few British army convoys, spaced at a hundred yards to minimize the danger from air attack. At the edge of Le Mans, which was the new headquarters, we passed two or three military work gangs of Senegalese, digging up the road and arranging barricades of old automobiles and farm machinery, apparently with some vague idea that they might be able to stop the German tanks. There didn't seem to be any guns to help do the job.

Le Mans took the full force of the refugee waves from Paris and the north. The central square, with its monument to the Army of the Loire of 1871, was a mass of cars and carts and bicycles, all piled to the groaning point, all southward bound after a brief halt for food, fuel, and the latest depressing news. Even the smart folk from Paris, who dressed for the boulevards even in their trip to disaster, were not riding in comfort. Their smart cars were overloaded as badly as the

big farm wagons or heavy trucks, some of which seemed to be carrying whole dynasties of peasant families on four wheels.

I counted twenty-three people on one three-ton truck. The driver and three women sat in front. Fence posts had been lashed along the low sides of the body, and interlaced with wire to increase the carrying capacity. The bottom layer of the load was furniture, heavy bed frames, trousseau chests, and the like. Then came a thick layer of boxes and great bundles. On top of them were the mattresses, a dozen or so of them, and lashed on the very top a few favorite chairs. The people clung to the apex of the load as best they could. Four bicycles were hooked over the tailposts, and two more were wedged in between the front bumper and radiator.

The correspondents were billeted in private homes around town. I drew the living room of a small house, and a couch six inches too short. The room was one of those "best sitting room" affairs which are opened for weddings and funerals, and aired once a year during spring cleaning. Drew was across the street, in a house where he insisted there was even a bathtub. Nobody ever had time to verify the rumor.

The Germans were over early next morning, and returned several times during the day. Each time it was the same story. The planes always flew quite low, in threes or sixes, and the refugees in the streets could clearly see the black crosses on the undersides of the wings. They seemed to have no interest in bombing Le Mans; in fact, they ignored it and its defenses.

Each time, the planes' drone could be heard long before the alarm sirens sounded. Each time it was the refugees in the square who heard it first. They knew what the sound had meant on the long, straight roads of the north, and they

crowded indoors or crawled under their cars, where at least they would be safe from splinters and antiaircraft fragments.

They didn't need to worry in Le Mans because when the Germans appeared, two or three of them at a time, they went right on past the town, bound for something more important than a few score thousand nervous citizens and a few score thousand more from the north who had already had their lives knocked to bits and were unworthy of further attention. Each time, the antiaircraft, what there was of it, fired a few rounds which burst far behind the steady, contemptuous bombers. Then, when they were on the point of vanishing, three pursuit planes climbed laboriously up from an airfield somewhere on the outskirts. They were too far away for me to recognize their type, but they didn't look nearly fast enough to catch the bombers.

Each time they returned fifteen minutes or so later, and climbed back up again when the alarm sounded. They seemed to be doing little more than going through the motions of defense.

Outside Le Mans, hidden in the shady park of an old chateau, was a remnant of British armored strength, a unit of the Ninth Lancers which had been drawn back from the north after battering itself futilely against the strong German bridgehead at Abbeville. They had ridden light tanks and armored cars into a crossfire of 37-, 77-, and 88-millimeter guns and had fought against Nazi panzer units which out-gunned them, out-footed them, and were almost impervious to their machine-gun fire. Of course they had been beaten back, although once or twice they had halted the advance “by a bit of bluff, you know.”

Bluff and courage were about all that was left, plus a couple of dozen battered “armored fighting vehicles” which

the men were trying to get into shape under the trees. Those which were usable at all were destined to be driven off the ends of the piers at Brest and St. Malo a day or two later, when the B.E.F. left France for good. Perhaps it was just as well, because they were not very good tanks by modern standards and would have added little in defensive strength to the island of Britain.

We had tea and jam cakes at a long trestle table in the stripped baroque dining room of the chateau. The officers were young, almost without exception, with the fresh, rosy look of well-born young England which officers the famous cavalry regiments. A few had grown mustaches in the fierce cavalry style, but it seemed to emphasize their youth rather than disguise it.

Somebody in the mess told us that the Germans had entered Paris that morning. The younger officers were talking about "getting more tanks and going after them again." A major in his early thirties who sat beside me shook his head, and said he guessed the show was about up.

"Paris could have been a fortress," he said. "And the French have given it up without firing a shot, without blowing a bridge or tearing up a single rail. They've turned it into one great bridgehead over the Seine. When a nation gives up its capital without even trying to defend it, the show is about up. By God, the Poles can be proud for Warsaw."

Back on the edge of Le Mans, as we threaded our way in through the swelling flood of refugees, Senegalese soldiers were still fooling around with the improvised "tank obstacles" they had been told to put up. I remember one—one of the few solid ones, it was—which was flanked on either side by

open ground which nobody had attempted to obstruct. Some of the others were better placed, across the narrow streets between sturdy houses, but in most cases they were so flimsy that the refugees could have overrun them, let alone the tanks.

The square had thinned remarkably, and it was noticeable that the refugees coming in from the north no longer stopped at Le Mans. It was too close to Paris.

In the big café on the square, the atmosphere had gone dead. Only that morning, there had still been a certain amount of bounce about it. The fall of Paris had taken something from every Frenchman, and the people sat at the marble-topped tables in silence. The only noise came from the British contingent, officers and men. Of course, Paris was not their city, but that was not the full explanation. There is something very resilient about any British soldier, anywhere, which makes it possible for him to laugh, and to enjoy his beer and his food. There is a sort of school holiday picnic atmosphere about any gathering of British soldiers which may not make for a maximum of efficiency, but which does have a lot of other compensations.

Colonel Mac told us that evening that we would start for the front next morning, splitting into three parties, and rendezvous the next night at the schoolhouse in St. Aubin d'Aubigné, in Brittany. We looked it up on the map and discovered it was sixty-five miles or so west of Le Mans. Once down into the neck of Brittany, there was little chance of our ever moving east or south again. In other words, the B.E.F. was about to evacuate again.

Mac finally admitted that we had been ordered to clear out twenty-four hours before, but that he had succeeded in

staving off the time. We still had a teleprinter line open to London, and I sent off a story guardedly stating that with the fall of Paris the situation had changed so radically that the B.E.F. had been forced to change its plans. Somewhere en route, somebody carefully altered it to "unchanged plans," which duly appeared in print and looked very silly indeed.

I told my French family that I should be leaving the next day.

"I know, and you won't come back," the wife said. "We have been listening to the bad news on the radio."

I tried to lie it out, and assured them that we would all be back in a day or two, after inspecting the "front."

"No, the Germans will be here in a day or two," she said.

I asked them whether they would stay in Le Mans "if" the Germans occupied it.

"Yes," said the father. "We have a son in the army and one in the air force, and they might be trying to get here to us. Perhaps the army will re-form on the Loire, and drive them out again." I thought he said it with no conviction. No one who had sensed the atmosphere of Le Mans that night could have had any conviction of French resistance. Only the British were truculent and talked of "standing them off."

It was a little unclear just where the Germans would be "stood off." Some of us talked about a line across the Breton peninsula, to be held at all costs so that Britain could have a foothold on the Continent while she built up her strength. But the strength of the British Army was back in England, battered and unarmed. Its arsenal lay along the roads outside Dunkirk. What was left of it south of the Seine was a pop-gun force, and it could expect no help from the French, who had been led, or misled, from disaster to disaster, and for the moment were beyond wanting to fight.

The next day, June 15, we drove off in two small, commandeered Citroens: Captain Jerry Dunn, two photographers, and a military driver in the first, Lieutenant Titley, Alaric Jacob of Reuters, and myself in the second.

We had the northbound lane of the smooth road to ourselves. Everything was moving south, in that same, interminable procession of smashed homes and ruined lives. Every face bore the fixed, refugee look.

Somewhere in northern France someone had hit on lashing a mattress to the roof of a car, as protection from splinters and spent bullets, and the idea had caught like wildfire. There were hundreds of cars with their mattresses, and here or there someone had improved on the device with a sheet of corrugated iron added on top. Again there were the big farm trucks, piled with the belongings of a village, the carts loaded down with bedding, the people on bicycles or on horseback, and an increasing number of plodders on foot.

We passed one woman dressed in middle-class best black dress, carrying one baby in her arms while a second child, no more than three, trudged by her side. They had no possessions except the clothes they wore. How far she expected to get before she was overrun by the flying columns, I don't know. I don't think very many people in that refugee column knew where they were going, but the urge to go away from war was driving them night and day.

The peasants in the fields beside the road were a strange contrast. They went about their haying, heedless, it seemed, of the turmoil which flowed past them toward the south. Perhaps at the last moment, when the war was on top of them, they would join the flight. At the moment, the urge with them was to keep to their normal work, stick to their homes,

clinging to all the normal, solid things which made their lives, and which the fugitives on the highroad had lost.

Occasionally a plane appeared, and magically, the road emptied. The refugees melted into the ditches and the hedgerows. We stopped the cars in accordance with the book of rules, got out, and waited. Each time, that day, the plane was friendly, once a French bomber flying low and slowly, once an old trainer, and once a pair of dun-colored British Hurricanes, which flashed over the road with the distinctive whine of the Merlin engine and raised everyone's spirits a small notch.

When the noise of the motors had faded, everyone started moving again. One of the most uncanny things about that highway was that except for the dead faces moving south, and the desperation which rode in every car and farm wagon, there was nothing to suggest war or destruction. There was no sound of artillery, no machine-gun fire, no bombs—just sunlight and great white clouds and the soft spring fields on either side of the road.

Nobody seemed to notice us. Once a child waved in a village street, but the people on the road fixed their eyes straight ahead, with no regard for what lay behind them to the north.

Near Gacé, the character of the southward flight began to change. There were not so many civilian refugees, but the current ran stronger than ever because now the French army was fleeing, too.

I had never seen an army in demoralized retreat before. This was one. There was no semblance of military organization. The soldiers mixed with the refugees, and like them, got south as best they could.

There were scores of fast, big army trucks which hooted

their way down the road, flashing past the slow line of the fugitives with the dust swirling up behind them. Usually, the trucks were loaded down with soldiers; sometimes a few refugees had been taken aboard, but there were many of them which could have carried more people to safety, and which rushed on down the road without stopping to help.

I saw dozens of trucks fitted to haul field guns, but never a gun behind them. They had been abandoned somewhere up the road, along with the men's rifles and all the ammunition and other gear. Nothing had been taken along which might impede flight. Flight was the only thought left in that remnant of the French army. Many of the soldiers seemed relieved, almost happy, that life had been simplified to that one element. A few of them shouted jibes at us over the tailboards of their trucks because we were moving north.

We stopped by the roadside near Bernay for a quick lunch. Down the hilly road behind us strolled the stragglers of the French infantry, men on foot, without rifles, without steel helmets or gas masks, without any equipment but their shoes and shapeless uniforms. One, who with rare devotion had carried his rifle slung on his back, threw himself down on the bank and pitched it disgustedly into the hedge. I gave him a drink from my flask and asked him if he wasn't going to need it again.

“Why should I?” he asked. “We never fight. We build our defense lines, and get the guns into position. Then when we see the Germans we hitch up the guns and get out. Now we don't even hitch up the guns any more.”

At the crossroads on the edge of Bernay, we stopped to ask our way of a sergeant who lounged by the road. “Brionne is still holding this morning,” he said, “but I wouldn't bother to go there. I think there will be an armistice, and you prob-

ably won't see any fighting. We are all off to look for food. In two or three days, perhaps we will fight again."

We went on up the road, which was now empty. Everything was quiet. At the end of a straight stretch in a bend behind some trees, we noticed movement the other side of a stone wall.

We were a hundred yards or so from the bend, bowling along, when a bicyclist appeared, riding alone. He threw himself into the ditch and ripped his carbine from his back.

I didn't realize he was firing until the car in front screeched to a halt, and Jerry Dunn opened up with his .38. From behind the stone wall came the crack of two more guns.

For the space of thirty seconds or so, while the drivers frantically wrenched the two little cars around in the narrow road, Jerry held off the foe. There was a Lee Enfield in each car, for use of the driver, but as usual it was buried on the floor under a mass of knapsacks, gas masks, and typewriters.

The front car was turned first, and ripped past us, gathering speed, with Jerry leaning back out of the front window pumping lead like a Chicago gangster making a getaway. Then we were in motion too, in the unenviable role of rear-guard.

I don't know how many were shooting at P.R.3, that most inoffensive of all military units. We could hear the crack of several rifles, and Jacob and I looked nervously through the back window to see whether anything was following us. Once or twice I saw bullets kick up dust in the road.

We stopped, three or four miles back, and examined the cars. Neither had been hit. We had a drink on the kind fate which had sent that German advance fringe forward without a machine gun, and which had made them as startled as we were.

“Of course, I don’t suppose I hit anything, either,” said Jerry, “but it sure must have surprised them to have anyone fire back.”

While we were drinking, a convoy of big French military trucks appeared, moving north for once. We halted it, and a major with two rows of World War I decorations climbed down from the cab of the leader. He was taking supplies, twenty truckloads, up to “the front at Brionne.” We told him there was none, that the German advance units were several kilometers south of it.

“Then I must turn around,” he said after a minute’s thought. “You see, we have only three rifles between us.”

The sergeant had left the crossroads at Bernay. We wondered whether he had been stationed there for fifth-column purposes. Someone recalled how a British armored unit moving up into Belgium in May had been halted by a “French” colonel who pretended to get orders for its withdrawal over a field telephone. He was detected only when someone tested the telephone behind his back and discovered a dead line.

We branched off the main south highway onto winding, dirt farm roads which led southwest toward Brittany. Once we passed a horse-drawn artillery company, the only orderly unit we had seen all day. The men leaned down from the caissons and begged for cigarettes. The captain in charge talked vaguely of a rendezvous “down south” which he had been told to strike for. The unit had never been in action, and of course it never was, after that. Some of its harness and other equipment was brand new, but the guns were the old .75’s from the last war, with high, wooden wheels. They would not have been up to fighting a modern war at high speed, in which the artillery must move at tank speed,

and swing around after its target with the ease of a machine gun.

There was no sign of war on the side roads. We passed through gray little Breton towns, clustered around their big, gray churches, into a liquid gold sunset which seemed to put an inner light into everything it touched. The herds were in the fields, and the farm dogs barked at us as we passed.

When we arrived in St. Aubin d'Aubigny, P.R.3 had taken over the pump in the square in front of the schoolhouse, and the *bistro* which stood to one side. The unit had been ordered to get to Brest the next day, and to embark immediately.

We drove down the main highway to Brest, next day, without ever seeing a plane. It was Sunday, and the Bretons were out strolling along the road. The girls and the small boys had learned the "thumbs up" sign from the British troops, and they waved to us as we passed.

The war had not yet touched Brittany, and nobody seemed to realize that we were retreating to Brest, not going there on routine business, and that they were seeing their last of the British army.

Brest was jammed with British, and the big army trucks lined the streets. The people looked resentful and unfriendly, as though they feared the army would bring down the German bombers on them. They knew the British were evacuating, too, and seemed to blame them for the whole mess France was in.

All the vehicles had to be abandoned at the dockside. Some of the unit decided to remain until next day. The rest of us boarded an R.A.F. transport, just about to leave, because the French collapse was inevitable and we wanted to be back in London when it happened, to give our picture of it.

The transport was another of the cross-channel fleet, built to sleep two hundred or so. There were sixteen hundred on board. But the trip was as uneventful as a peacetime crossing. We slid out from the quay, past the great, graceful bulk of the new battleship *Richelieu*, and someone remarked that he hoped she could slip out and away from German hands. She had steam up, and it seemed as if she might try it. We went across without escort, and at daybreak were off Plymouth Hoe, a dozen other transports around us waiting to unload.

Somewhere at the back of the passport is a notation, “Reported at London 19/6/40, having landed at Plymouth 17/6/40.”

Of course there had been no passport control at Plymouth, or at any of the other ports where the fag ends of British hopes on the Continent crept home. For days after the French armistice they straggled in, from Brittany in liners, freighters, and cross-channel steamers, then later in tugs and trawlers, and finally in little fishing smacks and rowboats which somehow made their way to England.

They came from farther south, too, out of Nantes and then Bordeaux, where the humiliation of France had become complete. Most of those on the refugee boats were beyond suspicion. There were R.A.F. pilots or ground crews, men from the armored division and the few infantry outfits which had been in France after the Dunkirk debacle. There were diplomats or Allied statesmen or well-known newspaper correspondents or civilians driven from the Continent who could prove their *bona fides*. But there were a lot of ordinary French civilians as well, and on the way up to London in the train I wondered how many among them had been planted there

by the Germans in the hope that they could enter England in the confusion and work there for the fifth column.

It was strange how little trouble people had, at the time of the French collapse, in getting to England. Everyone expected to find a sea infested with submarines, and a German bomber patrol continually in the sky. Machine guns were constantly manned, and there was always an antisubmarine lookout which passengers shared with the crews.

The Germans for some reason of their own paid no attention to the fleeing ships. Probably they were beneath contempt because England was bound to see the hopelessness of resistance now that France had collapsed, and would quickly come to terms to save what she could of her empire, and to spare her cities the onslaught of the all-powerful Luftwaffe.

Unfortunately for the Germans, they reckoned without a strange transition which had occurred inside England.

CHAPTER 19

ONE OF the papers, the morning of June 18, carried a striking cartoon showing a British soldier, tin hat jauntily on head, standing with one foot in the Channel and the other safe on the home soil of England, shaking a fist toward the Continent. The caption was, "All Right, Alone."

That was the spirit which dominated England that day, and for many months to come, when there was nothing much more than spirit to throw against the Germans, if they should come with their irresistible rush. It was the spirit which drove Midlands industry at a pace nobody ever had dreamed of before. It was the spirit that threw up a thousand, or a hundred thousand, flimsy pillboxes on the beaches, that gave birth to the Home Guard and gave a purpose to the thousands of civilian defense workers who had been standing by for a year with nothing to do. It was the spirit that rode the wings of the R.A.F., which had been held in reserve to defend England and which was shortly to face the greatest air attack ever known.

"All Right, Alone" told in three words what the average mackintoshed, rain-ridden, garden-loving, very humdrum Englishman thought of the Nazi threat. He didn't know what

had caused the collapse of France, although he had never had much opinion of the French, anyway. He had no time for the argument that the British had let France down because they had not been able to arm a bigger army and because, except for a fragment known as the Advanced Striking Force and a few odd handfuls of planes, the R.A.F. had been kept in England. The French had let him down, and it was almost a relief to know that the war was all British from now on.

Fortunately the man in the mackintosh in the pub did not know what England had to defend itself with, or rather, what it lacked. I don't think anyone realized England's position in 1940 until the parachutists began dropping on Crete in 1941, and the panzer divisions went on from Greece to smash to the gates of Moscow. Even the staunchest would have been appalled, if he had known it at the time.

Underneath the “All Right, Alone” England was badly scared. Hitler was much closer than Napoleon had ever been. There were no friends left north of the Alps, and no prospect of real help short of America, which had shipped a few planes and was talking in comfortingly large figures that would be long in the translation from paper to hard steel.

In all probability, nobody will ever know how much sentiment there was for concluding a peace at once, and on any terms Hitler would grant. It was said that powerful City influences wanted to protect their investments, the big landholders wanted to maintain their incomes, that there were “Munich men” everywhere who still preferred appeasement to a fight. The slow anger of the common Englishman, who had entered the war unwillingly, but with the intention of fighting it out, overrode whatever influences of that kind there were.

Everyone talked fifth column, and there was a new

round-up of aliens who had been permitted their freedom when the war first started. The scare after the collapse of France cost two friends of mine a year and a half on the Isle of Man. In matter of actual fact, England is probably less vulnerable to fifth-column infiltration than any other country on earth because it is homogeneous and rooted very deep in its own soil and because Englishmen in general are loyal not only to the Crown but to one another.

Churchill, standing planted on the Commons floor for one of his grand fighting speeches, said that England would defend every hedgerow in the fields, and every house in the streets, against an invader. It would have, but the people in a position to know were quite aware that, if the German army ever set foot on British soil in 1940, the island would be lost. Courage would not have been enough because there were almost no guns.

The army was short of artillery, almost stripped of tanks, and weak in transport, technical equipment, and modern automatic weapons. The Home Guard grew up by tens, then hundreds of thousands, drilling first in old flannels and sweaters, with sticks for guns and rocks for grenades. It was a hark-back to the days when the Spanish Armada was sailing up from Biscay, and the merchants and clerks in London banded together in pike companies against the day when it would pour its heavy infantry ashore.

The navy was still unchallenged on the sea's surface, but it now faced an enemy who could strike from a score of strong bases between the North Cape and the Pyrenees. It was about to be extended as it never had been extended before. The R.A.F., which must be able to dominate its home skies if there was to be any hope of halting an invasion, was a completely unknown quantity.

What outweighed all the weaknesses of England was that behind the front line, on the east and south coasts, the nation was beginning to move and to work. A small man named Lord Beaverbrook, who relied for his chief effect on his remarkable qualities as an irritant, put new life into the air-production program. Other factories, which were beginning to turn out tanks of new types, and heavier anti-aircraft guns and field artillery and army trucks, moved at higher tempo.

New industrial plant, planned before the war but bogged down in construction by a lot of muscle-bound administration, was beginning to produce. The United States dug up from its hardly overstocked arsenals a few .75 field guns, and with them it shipped long crates of Springfield rifles for the Home Guard. The Guards regiments were the first to be issued with American tommy guns, which soon began arriving by the thousands.

Gradually the army got guns and enough ammunition to permit target practice. Gradually the Home Guard was given uniforms and tin hats, then a few rifles and a handful of grenades to a unit. Many of its men had service ribbons to pin on the uniforms; and, when they were taken in small groups to the championship rifle range at Bisley, they discovered that they could still squeeze a trigger on a target. Gradually the R.A.F. began to build up a solid reserve of fighter planes to meet the offensive which threatened every hour of the day. It was also beginning to get production of bombers like the Stirling and Halifax, whose names were still unknown to the public but which eventually would begin to hammer Germany harder than the Luftwaffe could answer back.

The process of rearming was painfully slow. It would never

have been possible at all if Hitler in June, 1940, had grasped the fact that, though England was determined to fight, she could be taken now. The offensive was delayed during July. It seemed to be about to develop during August. In September it was imminent, and there were still far too few guns, and only a handful of tanks.

But meanwhile the Battle of Britain was being fought and won so decisively that invasion became impossible for 1940. That meant a clear six months won for the production lines, and a chance that by next spring a real defense could be formed. The up grade was so slight that it was hardly noticeable, but it was beginning.

Nobody can give a full account of what happened in England during that summer of 1940 because there was too much urgency on everyone who lived in the island for him to grasp the complete pattern of work and improvisation and doggedness on which England's defenses were built.

Sometime in the future, when figures now secret are available, it will be possible to comprehend what England accomplished between Dunkirk and September 15, the day when the Luftwaffe lost 185 planes between London and the Channel coast, and admitted defeat in the Battle of Britain. The world will also realize how hopelessly inadequate were the tools of defense, and how desperate would have been the position of the British islands, if the R.A.F. had not blasted every hope Hitler had of invasion.

There are a few things, however, which are outstanding as I look back and which for me set the tone of England in 1940. Among them are three or four trips with P.R.3 to the defense areas along the English coast, where for generations

there had been no fort or strong point beyond the squat Martello towers erected when the shores were manned against Napoleon.

P.R.3 had returned from France minus (again) a large part of its baggage and most of its transport. Against the demands of the fighting army, it had little chance of getting a new issue of vehicles for months to come. In this emergency, the Daimler Hire Service sprang to the rescue with a fleet of most impressive limousines.

It was a sad step down in the world for them. In peacetime they had been part of that dignified breed, high in the roof and broad in the seat, which waited on the pier at Southampton to take American tourist families on the usual two-weeks trip through Devon, Cornwall, the Lake Country, and the University Towns. They had always stuck purposefully to the smooth main roads, moving through life at a comfortable and respectable thirty-five miles an hour, with two-hour stops for Tintagel, Penzance, Stratford, or Canterbury, and a good garage each night.

P.R.3 took them down into the sand tracks of the salt marshes, careened them up and down the country at a ruthless fifty or even fifty-five, left them out in the rain, and burned holes in the dove-gray upholstery. It always traveled in convoy, four or five cars spaced evenly out along the road, looking like a slightly ribald cross-country funeral procession.

Yokels have been known to raise their hats as P.R.3 passed by in all its dignity; but perhaps its greatest moment came one day in Yorkshire. By way of introduction, it must be stated that the British Royal Family is also partial to Daimlers, built roughly on the lines of and equally as imposing as the fleet which was P.R.3's.

This day in Yorkshire, P.R.3 was bowling south toward Whitby, trying manfully to keep contact with Major Pilkington, who was driving a new Packard up ahead, and inclined to try its speed on the straight stretches. Gradually, it became noticeable that the roadside was unusually crowded with waiting farmers. A few flags appeared. It was obvious that some personage, Churchill perhaps, was on a tour of inspection. Then word passed back through the convoy that the King was inspecting the coast that day. P.R.3 continued on its business.

The convoy rounded a corner in the highway. Ahead was a large bridge. Banked on either side of the approaches were regular troops, home guards, rural police and populace. The correspondents in the cars straightened their uniform caps self-consciously.

The first car started up the ramp toward the bridge. Somebody rapped out an order. The troops snapped to “present arms.” The Home Guard followed suit. Three local dignitaries removed shiny top hats and held them rigidly on their breasts. Children waved their flags. Everyone cheered.

P.R.3 continued somewhat guiltily on its way, recalling that the only recognition which had ever been its lot before had been the “thumbs up” sign from the French kids. A carload of photographers following some distance behind, which stopped at the bridge to ask for directions, reported later that the three dignitaries had left immediately after the passage of P.R.3, firm in the conviction that they had recognized the King in the first car.

Thus P.R.3 toured the land in state. It talked to the local Home Guard leaders, ate meals in the officers’ messes at headquarters close behind the coast, and watched the army, largely untrained and untried and only partially armed it-

self, try to construct a defense system which could stand off the heavy divisions that Hitler was massing cross-Channel.

The keynote of the defense was improvisation. Anything that would serve must be used. But the real sinews of defense were spiritual toughness and plain guts. There were few spots on the coast, that summer, which for equipment and man power and fire power were not a staff officer's nightmare, but the spirit of the men who stood watch was impressive for all that. Any German who had set foot in England in 1940 would have been fought as he never had been fought before, but courage alone can't beat machine guns and armored troops, and we knew each day on the coast that if the German army ever gained a foothold, England was gone.

On the steep coast of north Yorkshire, holiday promenades had been strung with barbed wire. Engineers were building pillboxes from brick, from stones, or from concrete. Unfortunately, where there should have been 18-pounders in the pillboxes, there were light machine guns. Where there should have been 25-pounders, or something heavier, in the emplacements, there were 6-pounders or antitank rifles. There had to be; it was all there were. Few of the pillboxes would have withstood a direct hit.

In Yorkshire, along the low cliffs of East Anglia, and down through the Straits of Dover where France was in sight, there were some heavy guns. There would be more, but for the moment they were very sparse. Down in Devon, light defense positions studded the steep, winding lanes. On the salty flats south of Folkestone, a few lonely machine-gun positions were the first line.

The defenses had to look forward, toward the sea, and backward, at the land, because parachutists would attack from the rear. They had to foresee an attempt to smother key

airdromes with parachutists and air-borne infantry. There must be antiaircraft guns enough to protect every important railway junction, every big power plant, and the factories where production was moving into high gear. There simply couldn't be enough guns for all that, for months to come.

On the roads leading inland from the coast, up to the outskirts of London and Sheffield and York, roadblocks were thrown together from whatever was handy. Some were scientifically constructed, with concrete and heavy steel rails, and were continued across country in a system of obstacles and antitank ditches. Others were the brain children of the local aldermen or the nearest farmer. Everyone with a used-up reaper or gang plow pitched it into the road as an obstacle; the junkyards contributed old wrecks of cars. It got so that, German army or no German army, even the British army was practically immobile. Gradually the worst “tank blocks” were removed, and the army put up its obstacles where it wanted them. But tank traps and road blocks are effective only because they slow up or halt a tank while the guns go to work on it, and there were not enough guns.

The defenses had to rely on depth and on the ability of brave men to hold up the enemy until mobile columns could be rushed up to engage him. There could be no question of heavy fixed defenses. The mobile columns were being formed and equipped as well as possible.

Some had massive old armored cars which were sturdy, but slow and unmaneuverable, and whose one or two machine guns would have been as useful as peashooters against German tanks. Some had a contraption known as the Ironside, a light British pleasure car chassis built up to about the height of the driver's head with light sheet steel, and designed to carry one Bren gun. The Ironside was open at

the top. It would have been a death trap against a low-flying plane or a well-aimed grenade, and its sides would not have stopped anything better than a .30 caliber bullet. There was another improvisation known as the Armadillo, an ordinary truck with a flat hind end on which had been built an open-topped cheese box of steel and concrete. It carried one or even two machine guns, and for weight if for no other reason was somewhat more reassuring than the Ironsides.

Some units had fast civilian sedans with holes cut in the roofs. These carried machine guns on utility mounts, and were to be used to go after parachutists.

Down in Devon I rode on an "armored train." It consisted of an engine which pushed one flatcar, pulled another. On each flatcar was an open box of steel mounting four machine guns. At the end of each was a 12-pounder on a swivel. This train had actually shot down an unwary Heinkel, which presumably had come too low in an effort to determine just what it was.

The men who rode in the Ironsides and manned the armored trains had no illusions about their weapons. They were quite well aware what chance they would have if they ever had to face the superbly designed masses of German mobile vehicles. But what they had was the best available; and, like everyone else in England, they would make-shift with it until something better came along.

All these things were still secret in 1940, and even the man in the pub who joked about the Ironsides and the Home Guard with their sticks and stones probably had no conception of how grossly undefended he was. It is possible to talk about all the improvisations nowadays because guns and more guns have come from the factories, and fully equipped

armored divisions have been formed. There were some other improvisations of 1940 which on second inspection turned out to be very good ideas, indeed, and these are still secret.

The remarkable thing about England in 1940 was not her state of unpreparedness, but the fact that, alone and unprepared, she had the spirit to shout defiance across the Channel and keep plugging ahead behind it, to the day when she was not only arming herself for defense but sending a flood of men and weapons overseas to fight for herself and her allies.

Some American businessmen in London, seventy-five or so of them, banded together in a defense unit of their own and offered their services as a sort of mobile Home Guard. They were fortunate because they had fast, powerful cars and were able to arrange to buy for themselves the weapons they needed, rifles, revolvers, and a tommy gun for each man.

The ordinary Home Guard was not so fortunate because he and his comrades got their battledress, steel helmets, gas masks, and rifles after everyone else had been served out with them. For months the Home Guard drilled with what it could muster in the way of weapons. Its members worked normal hours at their jobs, then went out in the evening or on Sundays to collect blisters, head colds, and lumbago on “maneuvers” or on guard. The Home Guard was largely men over fighting age, or youngsters, or men in jobs vital to the war effort who were exempt from the regular army. It was organized by district or by factory unit, to defend the areas where it lived and worked.

In the Highlands it was made up of ghillies, deer stalkers, shepherds, small farmers, or shopkeepers, men who could spot a rabbit moving on a far, bare hill, who had lived on

the windy slopes all their lives, who considered a bit of poaching good sport. In the Midlands and the mining districts it was men who worked hard with their hands and shoulders, and who would fight at the factory gate or pit head. In the suburbs of London it was clerks from the city who might one day have to defend their semidetached suburban homes. In Kent and East Anglia it was farmers and pub keepers and village doctors and dominies who knew every hedgerow for miles. Everywhere it had a strong leavening of men who had fought in 1918, and who had comfortable, worth-while existences for which they were ready to fight once again.

Retired major generals acted as sergeants. Local pastors took orders from the butcher opposite the post office. Men who owned factories producing machine guns or bombers drilled with their junior clerks, and crawled with them through the mud of stream bottoms.

Gradually, as it got its rifles, its mortars and grenades, and learned how to use them, the Home Guard became a defense force which might never be able to stand up in open battle, but which might seriously delay any invader. The army was forced to concentrate where the danger was greatest; the Home Guard was everywhere. It needed only the weapons because it always had the spirit to use them.

There was a factory in the Midlands which a few months before had been turning out heavy-duty electrical apparatus. Now it was producing tanks on a long, double assembly line. They were medium tanks which were fast and sturdy and which packed more fire power than anything else their size.

The factory itself was impressive. Even more impressive were the people who operated the big riveters and the drills and cranes and machine tools.

The foreman was an old steel man who took his whisky neat and large and confided in the local pub one evening that Pittsburgh was the finest town he had ever worked in. About a fifth of his workers were trained steel men. The rest were a hit-or-miss collection of the plain, ordinary people of the district.

A former pastry cook at St. James's Palace worked a big machine tool from Cincinnati. There were a dozen former stenographers, some pensioned clerks, an ex-civil servant or two, even a former lion tamer and a dirt-track automobile racer. They used the dirt-track artist as test driver for the tanks.

There had been a lot of talk in London of muddling in arms production, of factories where the workmen had so little to do that they built toy airplanes or rocking chairs, of supplies which failed to arrive. Probably there still was a lot of that sort of thing, because no country could lose in a month or two the complacency and inefficiency which had keynoted pre-Dunkirk England. There was no evidence of that in this factory.

There was none in the little shipyards I saw along the coast, where pleasure cruisers and sailing yachts had been built before the war, and where the slipways were now turning out fast motor torpedo boats or small antisubmarine craft.

London, as usual, was a bad show window for anyone who didn't try to look beyond it. Food rationing had cut deeply into the fare of any average family in England. It did not affect the big hotels and the expensive restaurants, where anyone who could afford it could eat without a ration card. There was still a long list of fine French and German vintages on any good wine card. Everyone in the West End of Lon-

don, at the theaters, night clubs, and bottle parties, could have a very good time indeed; and, although there were a large number of men and women in uniform, there was nothing very warlike in the atmosphere. It was remarkable how many foreigners seemed to have escaped from the Continent with enough money to live on the West End's best.

Most of London was working just as hard as the rest of the country. Fathers were air-raid wardens or part-time auxiliary firemen, mothers were volunteer nurses or canteen workers. They had little to do in the way of war work, the first part of that summer, and for a long time it was difficult to maintain interest in all the theoretical instruction on tourniquets or stirrup pumps or anti-gas treatment. It was hard even to remember, each morning, to sling over your shoulder the little cardboard box which contained your civilian gas mask. It is to the credit of Britain's civil defense workers that the overwhelming majority of them did stick to it, and were ready when the test came early in September.

Everyone agreed that invasion was inevitable, but nobody was sure just how it would come. Presumably it would be heralded by mass air raids of a ferocity nobody could imagine. Then the Germans would strike Ireland, to hem in the United Kingdom on all sides; or they would storm across the Dover Straits; or they would leave Dover alone, because it was too well guarded, and go for East Anglia; or they would strike Scotland from Norway, and Devon from the Breton peninsula. The German Wehrmacht, for its part, continued its preparations with the conviction that when it struck it would be irresistible.

Presumably it had a date for invasion in mind.

CHAPTER 20

THE WEHRMACHT never tried to invade England in 1940, because it never got a chance to. It never got the chance because, in the first place the R.A.F. gave the Luftwaffe one of the worst beatings ever inflicted on any German force, land, sea or air. In the second place, the R.A.F., seriously limited in its bomber squadrons and in the face of a huge concentration of German fighter planes on the airfields of northern France, staged its own offensive against the "invasion ports" on the eastern shore of the Channel, and the Germans were never able to get set for the attempt.

The purely defensive action of a few R.A.F. fighter squadrons against the waves of Heinkels, Dorniers, and Junkers dive bombers, with their mass of protective Messerschmitts, proved that the R.A.F. did dominate the sky over England. It held grimly onto that slight edge over English soil despite an all-out offensive by the Nazis. At times it was very groggy, and the young men who heaved their bullet-scarred planes four and five times each day into the air to give fight were worn out. In the end, it was not so groggy as the Luftwaffe.

Massive air superiority is essential to the German blitz technique, which is a thing of split-second timing and has

great elasticity in shifting its weight of attack. Even so, invasion might possibly have been tried, but for the other, little publicized, aspect of the Battle of Britain. The bomber squadrons, chiefly of Bristol Blenheims, which plastered the sally ports of Ostend, Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne, day and night, fair weather and foul, wrecked a dozen ominous-looking concentrations of barges and small craft. They bombed piers and quays and warehouses, and the railroads which led to the coast. They bombed low level and high level, in the face of fierce flak fire. They took their losses, but they brought the job off.

August 8, 1940, is generally taken as the start of the Battle of Britain, because it was the day the Germans first began coming over in great masses. Actually, the first tentative skirmishes had been fought out for a month before.

Dover, which traditionally is the spot where invaders of Britain try to smash their way ashore, won its nickname of "Hellfire Corner" long before the Battle of Britain, when the Stuka squadrons based behind Cap Gris Nez came swarming out to attack the east coast convoys. Those were the days before the R.A.F. kept a high patrol in the air from dawn to dusk, and the attacks were often very successful.

One day stands out in my mind as a typical Dover day. A convoy had been dive-bombed a few days before, and I had gone down from London in the hope of seeing another attack. The best vantage point near Dover was Shakespeare Cliff, traditionally the cliff of King Lear, which is the highest point on the southeast coast of England. The cliff rises steeply to a sharp point, then falls abruptly into the sea.

I was lying on the grass at the top about noon when the first attack of the day started. The glowing, mid-July air was

completely quiet; there had not even been the sound of a plane for an hour or more. Below me the ground fell down through a belt of small private gardens to a shallow valley, then rose again to the crest of the back cliff. Men were working on emplacements on the second cliff. Hundreds of tiny white butterflies danced in the sun over the gardens.

A mile to the north lay Dover harbor, its piers and break-water enclosing the anchorage. On the nearest pier were the tracks which used to carry the express trains from London out to where the Calais boat waited. There was no Calais boat there now. The only vessels in the harbor were two or three small, dun-gray freighters, a half dozen trawler-mine-sweepers of the Dover patrol, and a couple of business-like destroyers.

The little waterfront hotels on the quayside had bright awnings out, and there were brilliant patches of flowers in the windowboxes. The only warlike note was the balloon barrage, riding above the town. Beyond the town rose another cliff, crowned by the walls and the great gray keep of Dover Castle.

Dover Castle is like a synopsis of British history. There was some sort of fortress there before Julius Caesar came. There is still one battered tower, out toward the edge of the cliff, which is Roman. Behind it is a Saxon chapel. The keep is Norman; during the Napoleonic wars, when Dover was last threatened and England kept watch from its Martello Towers, French prisoners were kept in the Dover keep. In World War I the castle had been headquarters of the Dover patrol.

As I watched the castle outlined against the blue of the sky, with the smooth Channel stretching mistily off to the north below it, I wondered what emergencies the castle

would be asked to face in this war. Suddenly, high in the sky and far to the north, I noticed a thin white line which was not cloud. Slowly it crept down toward Dover. I remembered the trails of condensed vapor which had followed the Russian bombers across the Finnish sky.

The plane was still too far away and too high to see. Suddenly the trail veered off from the coast and went back toward France. But there were nine more trails behind it, and nine behind them. The air began to throb with the heavy motors. At that moment, the Dover sirens began to wail.

The planes, Dornier "flying pencils" in two formations of nine, came in in a very shallow dive. Somewhere behind me a battery of heavy anti-aircraft began to thud. From the town came a frantic chatter of Bofors guns. From the far cliff other heavy guns took up the challenge. The planes came stolidly on through a pock-marked sky, paying no apparent attention to the bursts. Suddenly there was a shimmer in the air below the first formation, as the sun glittered on the falling bombs.

Then the guns were drowned. Eighteen huge jets of water sprang from the harbor surface, and the ground shook with the rumbling explosion as the big bombs went off. Eighteen more great geysers shot into the air as the second formation unloaded. They were not so well aimed. They fell raggedly into the water, and all overshot the harbor.

The first formation was already turning back toward France. One plane was smoking from one engine. The guns kept hammering at the planes. There came the whine of Merlins from behind the back cliff, and two Hurricane fighters shrieked overhead, climbing desperately to get on the Germans' tails. It seemed a very small force to send after the eighteen big bombers.

I looked back at the harbor. By some freak, nothing whatever had been hit. The smaller boats still rocked at their anchor chains, and the quayside and breakwater glistened where tons of water had fallen back on them. From out in the Channel came a burst of machine-gun fire. The eight guns of a Hurricane or a Spitfire spit one hundred sixty bullets a second, and the sound is an angry b-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r in which it is impossible to distinguish the individual reports.

The planes were lost behind a great, puffy cloud, and it was impossible to see what was happening, but obviously one of the Hurricanes had gotten home on its target. A few seconds later there was a great shoot of water far out in the Channel. One down.

I considered myself amply repaid for the trip down, and went into Dover for lunch. By doing so I almost missed the most terrifying spectacle in my experience. I was walking back toward Shakespeare Cliff with Frank Fisher of British United Press when the convoy appeared.

It crept down the coast close under the land, twenty-three small coasters of five hundred to two thousand tons, with one destroyer and two armed trawlers as escorts. The little ships were on their way around to Plymouth or Weymouth or another of the west-country ports. Around and around them, overhead, circled a cumbersome old Anson of the Coastal Command, on the look-out for submarines.

At that time the British had not yet hit on the idea of flying barrage balloons from their ships as protection against dive bombers, and the convoy's only defense was the guns of the warships, its own inadequate machine guns, and whatever the shore batteries could do in the way of assistance. It was not enough.

Suddenly there were planes above, just under the bottom

layer of a big cloud—eighteen of them, flying in line astern in a wide circle. The sirens and the shore guns went off together, and the destroyer and the trawlers began to spit fire. Then the leading plane "peeled off," pointed its nose at the sea, and dove. At split second intervals the others followed. They were raw-boned Junkers 87's, the same planes which had smashed the nerves of the French forward troops.

A Stuka diving is a frightening sight. It drops like a plummet at seventy or seventy-five degrees, pulls suddenly out at a thousand feet or less, and as it screams back into the sky and banks off for home you can see the bombs hurtle down. Stukas usually carry three—one big, two small. The convoy was only a quarter of a mile offshore, and over the crash of the guns we could hear the high whine of the wind in the planes' struts.

Along the whole length of the convoy the sea leaped into the air. Some of the ships disappeared completely behind the great white geysers of water. One was hit directly in a blinding red flash of flame. The bomb must have torn her bottom out. She fell over on her side. One man ran along the bulge of the hull, slid down to the keel, and jumped into the water. We could see other heads near by. Then the ship's stern rose slowly into the air, and slid down out of sight.

A second ship had gone decks awash as we fascinatedly watched the first. She went down on an almost even keel. First the line of her decks disappeared and only the two deckhouses, stern and amidships, and a tall, raking funnel, remained. The stern deckhouse vanished, and only the bridge was above water amidships. Then the bridge tilted, and the stern came back above the surface. Suddenly the whole ship was gone. She had managed to launch a boat.

The rest of the convoy sailed on in formation. Eighteen

more planes had appeared from the cloud above, and their machine guns chattered into the sky as the second wave of attackers dropped down. They came through an inferno of shell bursts, and one must have been hit because it veered sharply off without unloading, and some of the cliff watchers said they saw it hit the sea and explode, far out in the Channel. I was too terrified at what was happening to the convoy to follow the plane out to sea.

Again the water was hurled into the air. One ship seemed to vanish in a split second, without trace. I took my eyes off her for a moment, and when I looked back she was gone. As the planes dove down, one after the other, I suddenly noticed the Anson, going stolidly along about its business of anti-submarine patrol while the Stukas hurtled past it to attack. Its only concession to the raid came from the rear gunner, who swung his twin .30 caliber machine guns madly and spat lead at the Germans.

Two more ships were going down, a total bag of five. Small launches from the shore were already picking up some survivors. Another vessel was afire astern. She made for Dover. So did another freighter which was down by the bows. A third headed for the shore in the cove below Shakespeare Cliff. Fifteen ships sailed on, with the Anson slowly circling above them and the destroyer leading the way. The Merchant Navy was carrying on.

I was dripping sweat from excitement, and Fisher beside me was damning the Germans over and over. Below us the ship still headed unsteadily for the shore. Suddenly she ran herself up on the rocky beach. We ran down the cliff path, across the railroad tracks, to the water's edge. Somebody from a house at the cliff top came up with a first-aid box. A half dozen soldiers who had been swimming during the

attack had struggled into their battledress and ran up to join us. Margaret Gilruth appeared from somewhere.

The ship was the *Summit*, six hundred tons, loaded with cement for the west-country. She lay twenty yards off the shore, canted slightly. A big bomb had struck her square in the forward hold; probably the load of loose cement had saved her. It broke the force of the fall and kept the bomb from piercing her bottom. The explosion had bellied out her sides in two great arcs, so that from above she resembled a paddle steamer. It had crippled her steering gear. Fragments had riddled her superstructure.

The men on board were struggling to launch a boat. They got her into the water, and lifted two companions down into her. They started slowly for shore.

We waded into the water and pulled the boat in onto the beach. The first man to be lifted out was badly hit. There was a hole in his back, just under the shoulder bone, and a thin stream of blood ran from his mouth. Another had a leg wound. Two others were unscratched. Then the captain jumped over the bow of the dinghy.

He planted his feet on the beach, and looked back toward France. There was a slight wound in his head, so that his face was half covered with blood. Blood ran down his hand from a hole in his upper arm. He asked for a cigarette, clamped it between his teeth, then stood facing, fists doubled up, toward the French cliffs, which were beginning to be faintly visible.

"The bastards, the bastards, the dirty bastards," he repeated over and over.

The convoy had hardly passed from sight around the headland toward Folkestone when the two destroyers in the harbor got up steam. They headed through the gap in the

breakwater, straight for France. Somewhere in mid-Channel they were joined by a flotilla of motor torpedo boats. Something worth shelling had been reported on the French shore.

Out they went, then swung broadside to, a mile or so off the French shore. We watched through field glasses while their guns opened up, and we could even make out the smoke of the bursts as the shells hit. Suddenly the torpedo boats went into action with a thick, white smoke screen from which the destroyers kept up their drumfire. German E-boats were attacking, and the sound of quick firers came back across the Channel with the thud of the heavier guns. The E-boats brought the dive bombers back with them; and, as the bombs fell, the water far across the strait looked like surf on a distant reef. Then the destroyers withdrew, slowly and limpingly. When they got into the shelter of the British shore guns they stopped. Tugs put out to sea, and both were towed in.

There were heavy casualties aboard each. And through the evening the ambulances clanged their way through the Dover streets.

It had been a typical day—perhaps slightly more active than normal—at Hellfire Corner.

The attacks on shipping continued, but the Stukas began to pay a heavy toll. The Ju 87 is an easy target for a ground crew willing to hold its machine-gun fire until the last moment. It is a sitting duck for a modern pursuit plane because it can do only 240 miles an hour and has only one swiveled gun firing astern. The Hurricanes and Spitfires began knocking them down like flies.

August 8 the mass onslaught started. Apparently the Germans felt ready for the grand offensive which was to put

them in London by September 15. First step was to smash the R.A.F. back from the coast, to gradually overpower it and drive it from the air, and to pulverize key ports and communications. The irresistible army would follow after the world's greatest air force had done its usual job of devastation.

That day two convoys were attacked by a total of roughly 300 aircraft, heavily escorted by fighters. Gradually the pace stepped up. More than 200 bombers hurled themselves at Dover August 12. By nightfall they had lost 182 machines in five days. Three days later a furious attack was launched at Britain's forward airdromes, Manston, Hawkinge, Lympne, and others farther back toward London. Another heavy wave hit Portsmouth. That excursion cost the Luftwaffe 180 aircraft known downed, probably more than 200, counting those badly damaged which never reached home.

Still it came back for more, and got it. By the night of August 18, the Luftwaffe had lost 697 of its best planes and crews. For five days it licked its wounds.

When the Germans returned to the attack on August 24, this time with huge masses of supporting fighters, the R.A.F. met them head on at the coast, fought them tooth and nail on back into England, then harried them again as they retired. Many bomber formations never reached the English coast before they were broken up and in flight. Often they jettisoned their bombs and ran. In twelve days they delivered thirty-five major attacks, and lost another 562 planes and crews. The forward airdromes were wrecks, but nevertheless they could be used. The R.A.F. was worn and battered. But it was still in the sky.

The London blitz began September 7 with a heavy daylight raid—350 massed bombers—followed by the first night

attack on the capital. The thunderous night attacks, which soon lost all pretense of military value, went on and on into the winter. But the Battle of Britain was essentially a day-time struggle, and gradually the onslaughts became fewer and were pushed with less determination. They died away in October.

Actually, the R.A.F broke the back of the Luftwaffe on Sunday, September 15, when 500 German planes in a morning and afternoon attack made a last desperate effort to overpower the defenses by sheer numbers. The 21 fighter squadrons sent out to meet each attack cut them to pieces. The Germans lost 185 planes for certain, quite possibly at least 50 more from the shattered waves of bombers which fled back to France, riddled with holes, defeated.

The Battle of Britain was over by October 31. It had cost the Luftwaffe 2,375 bombers, fighters, and fighter-bombers known to have been shot down in daytime. What it had cost in morale, no one knows, but I remember listening one afternoon at a Fighter Command operations room to a radio tuned in to the German interplane communication frequency, and hearing the frantic note in the voice of a pilot as he shouted “Achtung, Schpitfeuer.” The first German crews shot down in the Battle of Britain had swaggered and boasted that Hitler would release them within a month.

The Luftwaffe did not soften up the R.A.F. It had tired it, yes. But it had given the fighter pilots a confidence in themselves and their machines which they never could have gotten without battle. The R.A.F. held the skies over England, and from September 15 it knew it could continue to hold them.

CHAPTER 21

I WAS lucky during the Battle of Britain. In the weeks when the Luftwaffe was pushing its attacks slowly inland, and gradually stepping up their tempo, I was in Dover, the perfect observation post. The day the full weight of the attack shifted to London, I happened to be there for the week end, and there I remained while Goering tried to hammer into servility a city much too old and tough for him.

Dover early became a sort of three-ring circus of the Nazi blitz, and as such a mecca for sightseeing newspaperman. All the British agencies and the big daily papers kept permanent men there, and so did many of the American. There were anything up to a dozen photographers, a half dozen movie men, and several broadcasting crews.

An aging hotel called the Grand was headquarters. The bigger hotels had all been taken over for one purpose or another, and the Grand was the best there was left. It did very well—at least, it did until one day when a large bomb sliced a third of it away. It was located almost on the sea front, and thus handy for air-raid observation. It had a large bar presided over by one Josephine, who was tall and good-looking and altogether the best barmaid in England. It had

a crusty headwaiter named George who would supply food out of hours. It was liberal in its attitude toward drink. It even had three or four bathrooms on each floor.

Those of a somewhat more sober turn could live at the Shalimar, a quiet family hostelry which had balconies looking toward France. Unfortunately the Shalimar was teetotal; this resulted in my hasty departure one night when the landlady surprised a party on my balcony, including two American military observers much too exalted to be mentioned. The R.A.F. was beating up the French coast that night, and the fireworks display was magnificent. We had entered thoroughly into the spirit of the occasion. We wondered later whether the fact we had been caught singing “Die Wacht am Rhein” had anything to do with the landlady’s indignation.

The Grand, on the whole, was much more satisfactory. There was a slightly dilapidated lobby downstairs where the more thoughtful gentry could sit and meditate, or reenact the Battle of France, until the sirens went off. From upstairs windows poked a series of long, lethal-looking black snouts. These were telescopic cameras, fixed hopefully in position against the day when a Messerschmitt would obligingly blow up within range. There were several overworked telephones, and a night porter who always had whisky on hand.

The fall of France had left little scope on the Continent for itinerant correspondents, and the Near East field had not yet really opened up. The result was a congregation in Dover which read like a cross section of the American press in Europe.

There were H. R. Knickerbocker, Virginia Cowles, Vincent Sheean, Quentin Reynolds, Bob Low, Helen Kirkpatrick,

Ben Robertson and a dozen or two more from the London or Continental offices who classed as steady Dover customers. The British contingent was even more numerous.

Those who were not living in Dover at the time usually came down on a most convenient train which became known as the "blitz special." The special owed its standing to the methodical nature of the Luftwaffe, which worked very much to schedule in the early days of the Battle of Britain. The special left London at a decent hour and arrived in Dover at 11:45. Passengers had just time to hop a taxi, register with the police, and check in at the Grand Hotel before the first raid of any consequence of the day, which came at 11:55 to 12 noon. Only rarely was it late, and then usually because of bad weather. In that case, passengers could hold their cabs at the hotel and reach Shakespeare Cliff in time.

Shakespeare Cliff was the prime vantage point, high above the town and with a superb view of the Channel. The correspondents bivouacked, morning and afternoon, two thirds of the way to the summit, alongside a small board hut owned by an ancient Irishman named Paddy. At the very edge of the cliff Ark Mencken of *March of Time* kept a movie camera in position. Six months before, he had been standing guard in the bitter Finnish cold on the roof of the Hotel Tornio, waiting for the same sort of thing. Three years before, he had been doing it in Shanghai. Art said he thought it was about time he specialized in beauty contests, where you didn't have to wait so much of the time, but his patience got him some of the best air action shots ever taken.

The summer of 1940 was a perfect summer for air war. Day after day was clear, which is a rarity in England, and great, puffy clouds gave the planes a chance for cover. The raids followed very much the same pattern, day after day.

The R.A.F. was warming up to the battle as the Luftwaffe began its pressure tactics, and the first sign that a raid was coming was the sound of Merlins, off behind the back cliff. Then a patrol of Hurricanes or Spitfires would appear, climbing sharply in tight V formations of three. The Spitfires seemed to fight by tens, three V's and one odd man who sashayed back and forth at the tail end of the patrol, protecting its rear, and who was known as “tail-ass Charlie.”

The British radiolocation system had reached the point where it almost invariably gave the fighter defense squadrons enough time to get up and in position before the attack developed. First sign of the Germans was a faint throb in the air. Gradually it grew to a mutter and a roar, not the fighter's whine but the ponderous beat of heavy-duty engines.

Then the planes suddenly materialized out of the Channel haze. Early in the battle, they came in low down, at five thousand feet or so, and often they came without fighter escort. Gradually they were driven higher and higher, and masses of Me 109's and 110's circled above them like swarming gnats. The dogfights began to take place at fifteen thousand feet and up.

At first we could follow them clearly, because the Germans were low down and their objectives were close to the coast. The blunt-winged Messerschmitts and the little Spitfires, which are as graceful as a Degas dancer, tangled in plain sight while the Hurricanes tore into the bombers and cut their big formations to pieces.

As the battle wore on, the dogfights became nothing more than a pattern of vapor trails which spun itself out across the sky. Occasionally the planes were visible for a moment as flecks of light in the sunshine. Occasionally there was the shriek of a plane in a powerdive, or there drifted down

the b-r-r-r-r-r-r of eight British machine guns or the bop-bop-bop-bop of the Messerschmitt air cannon. Sometimes a dead plane plunged down, spinning out of control or trailing thick black smoke. It was amazing how many of the pilots managed to bail out in time. Their parachutes suddenly blossomed high in the air, and drifted slowly out over the Channel, while the rescue launches trailed them on the surface.

Dover joined in the fighting whenever it could. The guns pocked the sky with shell bursts. The barrage balloon crews grabbed their rifles, in case any German came low enough to make it worth while to shoot.

Most spectacular feature of the Dover fighting was the balloon-busting, an art brought to its peak of perfection by the "yellow-nose" squadron of Me 109's which contained some of Germany's crack pilots. Sometimes the squadron came over just for the fun of shooting down the balloons. Usually, they went for them after a dogfight over the coast, in a last gesture to England as they sped back across the Channel.

It was dangerous sport because the planes had to come low to aim, and must run into a murderous machine-gun and quick-fire barrage. Twice in one morning I saw Messerschmitts take direct hits from the Bofors guns, shiver in midair, and plunge into the sea. The Messerschmitt pilots apparently thought the game was worth the risk. When a barrage balloon is hit by cannon shells or incendiary bullets it flames a bright red, then slowly falls with a thick black trail of smoke trailing above it. By the time it reaches the ground, there is nothing left but a few scraps of charred fabric and a couple of thousand feet of cable to be wound in.

"Matilda," one of the balloons at Dover, held the record.

In one three-day period she was shot down four times, to the utter disgust of her crew. The yellow noses' greatest exhibition, though, was the day they came over in the morning and knocked down all twenty-three balloons in one grand ten-minute rodeo, then returned in the late afternoon, when new ones had been run up, and bagged themselves seventeen more.

Balloon-busting was a sort of sideshow to the air war, but for some reason it was a matter of intense importance to the censors. Presumably on the theory that the Germans didn't know how many gasbags they had potted, it was first decided that no correspondent could specify the total lost on any one day. Then for a while the ceiling was set at two. Four later became permissible. Finally, in view of the fact that the Germans invariably shot down many more than four, with a resulting suspicious uniformity in the number reported down, we won a great victory. We were permitted to say “several.”

The earliest violent German attacks on the southeast coast of England were against the forward airdromes. The dive bombers came over in waves, and the roll of explosions shook the air all along the shore. Gradually, the R.A.F. fell back from them, partly because they were so exposed but partly, as well, because by starting farther inland the British fighters could gain more altitude before they made contact with the enemy. But despite the immense damage it did to buildings and hangars, the Luftwaffe never completely knocked out the forward airdromes, and I have seen fighters come down to refuel within a few minutes of the end of a heavy raid.

Gradually the attack moved inland, out of earshot of the coast. First it was Canterbury, then other Kentish towns, then the Thames estuary, then one afternoon Croydon air-

port, where the planes from the Continent used to land. Another day, the Luftwaffe tried out its taste for the blood of British civilians in a vicious raid on the seaside resort of Ramsgate. It was just a forewarning of what had been planned for London, but in a way Ramsgate was more shocking than the London ruins ever would be, because a small town lacks the physical ruggedness to take such a raid in its stride.

Everywhere the Luftwaffe smashed at the defenses, the R.A.F. met it head-on. It chewed at the bomber formations from the coast to their targets, then back again to mid-Channel. Often it broke them up before they could penetrate more than a few miles. Sometimes they turned before they even reached the coast. That was after the losses had become so large that even Goering must have worried.

Nobody bothered any more to stop to look at the wrecks of German planes. They littered the beaches, and blotched the hop fields of Kent. They fell in village streets and private gardens. Correspondents at first had been skeptical of the R.A.F.'s claims of losses inflicted on the Germans. It was unbelievable that a relatively untried force like the R.A.F. could meet the mighty Luftwaffe in all-out battle and beat it at better than four to one. Gradually the correspondents learned how carefully those loss figures were compiled, and how many victims were listed only as "probables" because nobody had actually seen them crash into the sea. On at least one occasion, the R.A.F. claimed fewer victims in an engagement than I should have been prepared to swear I had seen go down.

The R.A.F. began to feel a surge of confidence, firstly in itself as a group of men, secondly in its machines and its training. It had the Hurricane, which in many ways is the

most versatile plane of the war. It had the Spitfire, which was then the world's greatest fighter, and still ranks among the best. It had been soundly schooled for combat. Its men had proved themselves.

In the ranks of the Luftwaffe, the reverse was happening. Since long before the war, it had been the world's best. It had cut every challenger to pieces, in Poland, in Norway, in the Low Countries and in France. Now it was up against an opponent which was its equal, and in the air over England its better. The Nazi air crews shot down over England in the first days of the Battle of Britain had been truculent and overbearing. By September, there weren't so many of the domineering ones. There were a lot who were doubtful, and there were some who were openly glad to have been shot down in one piece. There was even one who parachuted to earth equipped with his own pajamas, tooth brush, and razor.

One of the most vivid memories of the Battle of Britain is the helpless feeling I had the first time a real mass raiding formation passed overhead, bound inland. It was about noon of a hot, calm day. The air over the coast was hazy. It began to throb, and then the first Germans swept in over the cliff. Taylor Henry of AP and I counted fifty-four Heinkels and Dorniers, moving steadily in three formations of eighteen. From the haze above them came the sound of a powerful fighter escort.

The planes thundered on out of sight, but the sound seemed to be growing rather than diminishing. Then the second formation swept over, identical in size and as deadly impressive. A few minutes later came the third, too indistinct in the haze to be counted, but bigger, by its roar, than either of the others.

It seemed impossible that anything could stop such an

attack force. Yet a half hour later they began to come back, sometimes alone and sometimes still in close formation, sometimes in twos and threes. There was nothing very impressive about them. One of the planes which had managed to clear the coast went down, a few miles out in the Channel.

That was the same day that a Messerschmitt 109 came shrieking up the valley from Folkestone, fifty feet off the ground, machine-gunning the workers' houses along the cliff road. Taylor and I were caught in the road between the plane and a pugnacious Lewis gunner, a hundred yards away and below us, who began answering its fire past our ears. We took what is known in the R.A.F. as "violent evasive action" in the direction of the nearest ditch. I am told I tried to crawl under my tin hat. I know Taylor was trying to get into a culvert a foot in diameter.

I remember a small trawler which used to patrol up and down outside the harbor all day, and run for shelter into the cove below the cliff when the raid alarm sounded. It was part of a roughneck flotilla called the Dover Patrol, which was out day and night, in all sorts of weather, minesweeping and guarding the coast. By the time the trawler reached the cove, the guns on shore would be blasting. Not the trawler. Day after day, regardless of the raid, its crew hung lines over the stern and went fishing. If a Messerschmitt came too close, they manned the Lewis guns. Then they went back to their fishing.

I remember one duel between a Messerschmitt and a Spitfire which was fought out directly over the cliff. Each must have hit the other at the same moment. The Messerschmitt came to pieces in mid air. The fuselage and one wing plunged out of sight behind the back cliff. The second wing came

down more slowly, like a falling leaf; for a minute afterwards, it seemed, bits of fuselage skin or tail surface fluttered down. The Spitfire headed for the sea in a steep bank. Two hundred feet off the water, it pulled for a second into level flight; then a wing dipped and it turned on its back and started down again. Once it seemed to try to right itself; then it went nose down, dove into the water, and was gone.

Canterbury, which lies on the road up to London from Dover, still within smell of the sea, is a very gracious little town of old stone churches and half-timbered houses, of steep roofs and leaded glass panes. In the center rises the serene cathedral. Long before Canterbury became synonymous with the Church of England, the town had been a symbol to the faithful throughout the land. Thomas à Becket had been assassinated in the cathedral church. Chaucer's pilgrims had come down the long road from London.

Presumably the fact that a railroad passed through town made Canterbury a “military objective” in the eyes of the Luftwaffe. It seemed a pity, because there are so many railroad lines in southeastern England that the German bombers could have kept themselves busy all summer on bridges and junctions and things of that nature. They could have left Canterbury alone, if they had not been brought up on the theory of total warfare which blasts everything in its path, with special attention to the defenseless.

One sunny morning the Luftwaffe visited Canterbury. It was not a heavy raid, not the sort of systematic deluge of high explosives and incendiary bombs which is reserved for bigger targets. There were just three or four planes involved—I never could find anyone who knew how many—and they

bombed from quite high up, with a sort of casual precision. The bombs fell in a long line, diagonally across the main street.

One of them almost hit the railroad tracks. Instead, it hit a small candy shop, which must have been a very gay and cosy place a few minutes before. Of course it demolished it; the houses of towns like Canterbury, which look as solid as England herself despite their sagging timbering and lop-sided roofs, are not proof against even a small bomb. When I got there a few minutes later, the street for many yards was a mass of bright jelly beans, and sugar almonds, and taffy, and chocolate drops wrapped in tinfoil, and several children were already asking what had happened to the old shopkeeper. By a miracle, he had been blown clear and was unhurt, but the shop was a wreck of a child's heaven. It struck me suddenly that no one, either child or adult, cared to bend down and gather up candy.

That was the closest the Luftwaffe came to real damage. One bomb struck in the main street, blowing a hole in the sidewalk and pavement, shattering a few window frames, ripping loose a few thousand roof tiles, and shattering several hundred small panes of old glass. Splinters from the bomb gouged a few score holes in house fronts. Water flowed from a broken pipe. Another bomb struck an old churchyard and knocked down a section of wall; it turned over a few weathered headstones and splintered a shade tree. I don't remember where the other bombs fell. It was of no consequence, except to the small people whose lives were wrecked by them.

There is a very fine pub in Canterbury, and in it that noon they were starting something called a "Spitfire Fund," into which people could drop a few pennies or a shilling or so

to go towards a Canterbury Spitfire for the defense of England. I had heard about Spitfire and Hurricane funds in London, where City banking firms or big stores in the West End gave large checks, and produced very impressive totals in a short time. Canterbury's that day was being built up by the people at whom the Luftwaffe was aiming its bombs, the local insurance men and shopkeepers and garage owners, and the farmers in from the Kentish fields. As the men stepped up to the bar for their draught stout or their pints of “mild and bitter,” the landlady at the beer pump called their attention to the subscription list. The men gave silver, not coppers, that noon, and I saw none refuse. One group gave the change from ten shillings, each time one of its members bought a round.

Places much more insignificant than Canterbury got their share. Sometimes someone dropped a few spare bombs on a farm, or on a clump of trees with a church spire rising from them. One Nazi running back to the sea caught a glimpse of St. Margaret's at Cliff, and let fly with his one remaining big bomb.

St. Margaret's at Cliff was bound sooner or later, I suppose, to be attacked. It stands at the edge of the cliffs, closer to France than any other point in England. It couldn't long escape, along a coastline which was one great battleground. The Nazi bomb thudded into the churchyard right in front of the entrance. It must have had a delayed action fuse, because it penetrated quite deeply and blew a great hole when it exploded.

That probably was what saved the church, which is one of the oldest and most serene in England. The massive door was split, and a crack appeared in the flinty façade above it. The sides of the bomb crater were littered with fragments

of gravestones, mingled with weirdly shaped knobs of Kentish flint, dead white on their rounded surfaces, which looked like so many bits of bone blasted up from the ancient graves.

At the lip of the crater stood a gravestone, broken in half by the blast. The only word of the inscription left in the toppling stone was "Peace."

Gradually, the R.A.F.'s own offensive began to take shape. It was woefully limited, because fighters were the paramount need and most of the factories had to concentrate on them. The bomber squadrons got only what production could be spared over and above. But the Bomber Command kept at it with its Wellingtons, Whitleys and Hampdens by night and fast, light Blenheims by day. The Coastal Command shook a few squadrons loose from the Atlantic patrol to bomb concentration points in Norway, a dangerous flight even under summer conditions.

Dover was a grandstand seat for part of this new R.A.F. offensive, the attack on the Channel harbors which were to be Hitler's sally ports for invasion. I was lying, as usual, somewhere up on the cliff one afternoon when we realized for the first time that the Germans were getting some of their own medicine.

We had seen a formation of two-engined planes go over quite high, about fifteen minutes before. We thought they must be Germans returning home from a raid, although they were keeping much better formation than the Germans usually did after running into the British fighters. Then from somewhere around Gris Nez came a rumble of gunfire, punctuated by heavy, thudding explosions. Then the planes came back much lower, and by their noses we recognized them as Blenheims.

Sometimes the R.A.F. struck in the mornings, but usually it was somewhere around mid-afternoon before its attack developed, because from then on it could fly into the French coastline with the low sun at its back. Often the rumble from the French coast went on for hours, and if nothing was happening on the English side it was a very comforting sound. I remember one afternoon when a double squadron of Blenheims seemed to succeed in driving through to France on the tail of a mixed formation of German bombers returning from a raid. It seemed to catch the Germans completely by surprise, because there was a sudden long roll of bomb thuds from across the Channel, and the enemy anti-aircraft didn't start up until we could hear the first sounds of the British coming back.

By this time, American correspondents had long since stopped referring in conversation to “German” and “British” planes. They had become “theirs” and “ours.” It was not exactly strict neutrality, but quite understandable when four-fifths of the planes in the air were aiming in our general direction, and the other fifth trying to knock them down before they could line up their sights. We always counted “ours” as best we could when they came back in over the coast, and from this fragmentary check it seemed as if the R.A.F. were pulling off its quick, hit-and-run offensive with very small casualties. Occasionally a plane came back smoking, or jettisoned some gasoline as it crossed the coast. It was a small indication of what the German Heinkel and Dornier squadrons must have looked like—those that got back—after the British fighters had harried them over England.

The R.A.F. attack was at its most spectacular at night, when the planes swarmed over, smashing at Calais and Dunkirk and Ostend and the other sally ports, at the railways

which were carrying Hitler's invasion army up to the Channel front, or at the big German gun positions at Cap Gris Nez and other points. Then the whole coast for twenty miles rippled with fire. British parachute flares hung in great globs of light over the German positions. Big clumps of searchlights raked the sky. The German flak batteries erupted in splashes of flaming onions, tracer, and high explosive shells, and periodically there was a sudden series of great flashes of light down on the ground as a stick of British bombs exploded.

Sometimes the fireworks lasted until nearly dawn. I remember one morning about three o'clock, moonless and misty, when all the planes had gone home save for one German reconnaissance machine over the Dover coast and, apparently, one Britisher still over France. On the English side, a dozen big searchlights fingered the sky, groping after the dim sound of motors which betrayed the plane. Over Gris Nez, a dozen or so searched for the British machine.

Each plane must have started for home at almost the same moment, and the searchlights on both sides followed them out across the Channel until for a minute or two they seemed to meet, ten miles out and high in the hazy sky, in a great Gothic arch of light. It might have been a symbol of Europe at peace, rather than a by-product of war.

The struggle back and forth across the Channel suddenly took on a more ominous note when the big German guns began dropping shells out of the upper air onto the British coast. There were several clumps of them, some in fixed emplacements and some, booty from the French army, on massive railway mounts. Except for an occasional attempt to shell a Channel-coast convoy—the attempts were always without success—there was something desultory about the

German bombardment. Sometimes the shells fell in Dover, sometimes in the valley behind it, sometimes on the cliffs, without ever seeming to have any objective worth really concentrated fire. Occasionally the ground trembled as British guns fired a few salvos in reply, but ammunition of all sorts was precious in England that summer, and was saved for specific jobs.

Bill Stoneman and I came down to Dover one afternoon by a late train from London. All the way down we had been held up by air alarms. Under wartime regulations then in force, all trains were forced to slow down to fifteen miles an hour the moment the sirens went along the route. We had crept along at that rate, stopping interminably at the stations, with most of the passengers, as usual, dividing their time between the windows, from which you might see an air battle, and debates on whether a train was safer at fifteen miles an hour than it would be at forty-five. When we arrived in Dover, it was dark.

As the policeman at the station exit examined our credentials by a blued-out station light, there was a sudden sharp crack close-by.

“Is there a raid on?” I asked, thinking the sound must have been some new sort of ack-ack gun.

“Air raid me ’at,” broke in the ticket taker. “The blighters are shelling us.”

We made the hotel in record time through the dead streets. Three or four times on the way there was the same sudden bang. Something about the configuration of the pocket in which Dover lies made it impossible to tell where the sound came from. It seemed to be all around us, and yet neither of us so much as caught the flash of an explosion. Actually, the shells were falling several hundred yards away, but I reconfirmed my feeling of that night at the front in Finland,

that in an air raid you at least can hear the motors of the planes above you, and know there is someone topside who may let fly at you any moment. In a bombardment at very long ranges, the sound of the gun reaches you after the projectile arrives, and the projectile falls so steeply at the end of its flight that there is almost no whistle to warn of its approach.

The Germans dumped about ninety shells into Dover that night in just over an hour of shelling. Apparently it was an effort to demoralize the civilian population. If that was the purpose, it was a dismal failure. We sat out the bombardment in the bar of the Grand Hotel, a room peculiarly vulnerable to bombs or shells. The usual hundred or so people, officers and civilians, were there, drinking slightly more than usual and stopping occasionally to remark on a burst which sounded particularly loud. About the time the bar closed the shelling stopped, and everyone who didn't live in the hotel went home.

Next morning a few hundred people left Dover, because they couldn't stand the idea of blind shelling. Everyone else remained. The small boys were at their usual vantage points, waiting to spot the planes coming in for the day raids. Some of the boys were so good at it that they could estimate the size of the formation, then spot the type of the raiders, long before the average military man. The shops were all open and the town went about its normal business.

We started looking for shell damage, and the first thing which struck us was that a long-range projectile, which must be specially designed for its job, is relatively ineffective compared to the average bomb. The great advantage of artillery is its greater accuracy.

Some of the shells had struck small dwellings. These they

had wrecked, but not with nearly the efficiency of a 250-pounder from the air. Many of them had landed in fields or gardens, where they made comparatively small craters. One landed in the street outside a Catholic church, breaking the windows and putting a few holes through the roof. Another scored a direct hit on a Church of England church, knocking a hole ten feet or so in diameter in one wall. It had burst in the roomy interior, and the blast had wrecked most of the pews and woodwork. Structurally, the building had not been severely damaged. A medium-sized bomb would have left little of it standing. We went back to the hotel convinced that Dover could stand the shelling, too.

One of my last nights on the southeast coast looked for an hour or so like the real thing, the invasion which everyone had watched for since June. The night was absolutely calm, and there had been not a sound of planes for hours. There was a bright, high moon. The channel off Dover was a mystery of white mist.

It was just past midnight when a bugle sounded from one of the cliffs behind us. The call was taken up farther away. There came a sound of quick feet in the street. I dressed and went down to the sea front. Silent men were already in position, and behind us in the town were sounds of moving metal as heavier forces took their places. On the cliffs above Dover, and up and down the coast through the realm of the old “Cinqueports,” traditional gateway to invasion, every position was manned.

We could see nothing in the Channel because of the mist. The low beat of a slowly moving motorboat came from it, but we could not tell whether it was British or German. Someone whispered that the mist was artificial fog, and that the Germans were attacking under its cover. For an hour the

motor beat was audible, and it seemed always to come from the same spot.

Someone from a near-by headquarters said the alarm had been given from Hastings, where Norman William forced the last bridgehead on British soil. It was not a full invasion alarm. That would have set the churchbells ringing for miles inland, and warned all Kentishmen that the time had come to defend each pleasant field, each lane and each hedgerow. This was an "at ready," for someone had seen unusual activity close to the French shore.

After an hour and a half or so the excitement wore off, and I found I was very sleepy. I strolled back to the hotel and over one of the porter's nightcaps asked a naval officer from the Castle whether he thought the Germans ever had even tried to invade. He said he was convinced they had not.

We discussed the stories of the traditional "neutral traveler" arriving at Lisbon or disembarking from the Clipper at New York that the hospitals of Belgium and north France were jammed with charred wretches, the remnants of an invasion force which had been chewed to bits by the R.A.F. and then beaten back from England. We both agreed it had never happened. If there were hundreds, or thousands, of badly burned German soldiers in hospital, it was because the R.A.F. one afternoon, as it was persistently reported along the coast, had surprised an embarkation exercise in full swing and massacred the men in the big barges packed in some narrow harbor.

"Why they don't attack us, the Lord only knows," the officer ended up.

The Germans never tried an invasion in the months when England was weak because the dog-tired fighter squadrons of the R.A.F. battered the Luftwaffe's ace combat groups to

within an inch of their lives, and because somewhere it found the bomber strength to prevent the massing of landing craft across the Channel which an invasion would have required.

CHAPTER 22

ON SATURDAY, September 7, 1940, I left Dover about noon to go to London for "a quiet weekend." As the train pulled out of the station, the big guns were in action against a flight of twelve silvery German bombers heading inland from the Channel. We thought one plane was already smoking, but just then the train entered the first tunnel, and we never saw them again.

London was enjoying its last hours of peace for many months to come. A couple of dozen Australian soldiers lounged at the base of the Nelson column in Trafalgar Square, feeding the pigeons. The traffic in the streets looked even heavier than in peacetime; nobody ever had been able to explain why England, with her life dependent on the ships which brought food and fuel across the Atlantic, had not long since banned civilian automobiles, and severely restricted the gasoline ration for all other vehicles.

I walked out along Chelsea Embarkment, where swans swim sedately in the murky Thames, and the seagulls wheel low over the balustrade, begging for bread. There was the usual quota of nursemaids wheeling baby carriages; a lot of children evacuated from London at the start of war had come back when nothing happened to London. Even the

recent raids on Croydon, and on the docks and oil stores down toward the mouth of the Thames estuary, had not served as a warning that the German attack was slowly nearing the city. I dropped in at Bill Stoneman's.

The sirens went. It was just about five o'clock in the afternoon, a sunny, late-summer afternoon, with great banks of white cloud and a crisp, cool breeze. Almost immediately after the sirens had stopped wailing, came the sound of distant b-r-r-r-umphs. Both of us had heard bombs much nearer, but it seemed to us we had never heard such a succession of detonations. We went out to the Embankment to investigate.

Opposite us, over the thick trees of Battersea Park, bursts of anti-aircraft splotted a bank of cloud. We could hear a plane over there somewhere, one of the stragglers which had been forced to run for its life when the fighter squadrons dove into the big German formation which had stormed up-river.

The fighters had not been able to stop them all. Driving on through the barrage under the protection of a swarm of long-range fighters, the bombers had gotten through to Dockland. Way downriver from us, great black plumes of smoke slanted upward in the wind until they merged with the white of the cloud banks. Sometimes, even at that distance, we could see the red flashes shooting through the black smoke. In the few minutes we watched, the fires seemed to have doubled in extent.

We stopped only to pick up our steel helmets, thanking Providence that we were both accredited war correspondents, and had them as part of our army issue. Although we didn't know it then, they were going to be our constant companions for three months to come.

We found a taxi driver willing to go down into Dockland, and told him to head for Charley Brown's. Charley's was one of the most famous pubs in Limehouse, which lies at the western end of Dockland. Limehouse is no longer the place of foggy alleyways and sinister Chinamen with slippered feet and long knives, which made it the delight of all fans for lurid fiction. Charley Brown's, however, had a true, salty flavor all its own, and we knew we could find out there where the damage had been done. We didn't need to inquire. As the taxi swung out of Commercial Road, the Fifth Avenue of Dockland, its tires began crunching on glass. Windows were out of most of the houses. Down a side street we saw a cascade of rubble which had been a row of three small houses.

A bomb had struck in the road, fifty feet from Charley Brown's. Streetcar wires trailed into the street. The front had been blown off the nearest building. The big, frosted windows were gone from the pub, and its door had been wrenched from its hinges. Inside, the ceiling had come down onto the ornate carved bar, and the floor was a mass of plaster, broken glass and splintered woodwork. Jimmy Scott, the proprietor, being a philosophical soul, was serving free drinks to all from the half dozen glasses which had survived.

There seemed to be fire in all directions. A quarter mile toward the north, a big lumber yard was burning fiercely. Behind us, toward the river, a warehouse poured black smoke; it was a sickly-sweet sort of smoke, as if the building had been a store of sugar or spice.

Hose from the regular fire department was already snaking along the streets. Already there were people with what belongings they could scrape together, stumbling along. All of them seemed to be going toward the west, because the blow had come from the east.

We made our way down to the river. We stood on the steps of an empty church, looking out over the water. There must have been a wedding there that morning, because the bright little bits of confetti were thick under our feet.

There was a big building belching fire just upstream from us. Across stream the docks were an inferno. The smoke drove in great clouds across the river, and the fires filled the air with a roar like a battle of all the winds.

Great sparks fell through the trees of the churchyard, and self-consciously we put our tin hats on our heads. Several barges were burning fiercely out in the stream, and two big freighters, moving like ghosts through the smoke banks, groped their way out toward the sea and safety. It was as dark as midnight.

As we walked back toward the spot where we had left the taxi, we passed a wall which bore a plaque commemorating the first bomb from a Zeppelin to fall on London during World War I.

They were trying to dig through to a mother and daughter, pinned under tons of timber and bricks and roof tiles, just around the corner from Charley's. Men with blue warden's helmets were on the job, and there was a little gray pump car which looked new to me, and which turned out to be from the Auxiliary Fire Service. The civilian defenders of London were already on the job. The men worked clumsily, tugging at the timbers with bare hands, but there were scores of people to help, and they made quick progress.

We separated to telephone our first stories. I tried at the small local post office. The two old ladies who ran it were down in the debris of the wrecked front, picking up the pennies which had spilled out of the stamp cashbox. Their telephone was dead.

I tried next in a drab little second-hand clothing shop; its front had been blown away, and the dingy suits on the hangers had been overlaid with thick, gray dust. The proprietor, a typical, chipper little East London Jew, poked his head out of the back room and told me to come in and use his telephone.

I got the connection and began dictating rough notes to Harry Flory, who was running the coverage from Bouverie Street. As I talked, I looked around. The room was the usual living room, dining room and kitchen combined; with a few bits of cheap furniture and one ornate lamp. On the center table lay a big yellow table cloth, onto which the proprietor and his crying wife were dumping everything they considered valuable or useful: some clothes, some tinned food, a few knickknacks and a great mass of bedding. The proprietor began knotting the four corners together. Suddenly, just as the sirens sounded the all-clear, a thought struck him and he came running over to me and tugged at my elbow.

"Say, what do I do to get the insurance?" he asked.

There was a great crash outside, and the building rocked. A time bomb had gone off in the neighborhood. The wife ran over crying, "Don't worry about that, we must go from here." The husband gathered up the table cloth. "Well, open for business sometime," he said jauntily. They left me at the telephone.

Bill and I covered miles of Dockland that afternoon. Our taxi driver went cheerfully with us, and when we asked him if he didn't want to get back to the West End, in case the Germans came back, he said it wasn't often he got fares like ours. He seemed to be anticipating good business.

Everywhere, it was the same picture of broken glass, great

dock buildings in flames, and occasionally the shattered dwelling houses of the small people who were now being called on to fight in the front line. Periodically, time bombs exploded, wiping out more small buildings, the structures around which plain Londoners had built their lives.

The people were dazed and confused by the blow which had struck them. They had not yet recovered their balance, and with it the superb defiance which carried London through the night blitz. Just as we turned the taxi back toward Fleet Street, the sirens went again. In that moment, I saw Londoners closer to panic than I ever saw them again.

People began running in all directions, looking for shelter in a district where there was next to none. The crowds waiting on the curbs to get some sort of transport westward surged at the overloaded buses and streetcars. Only the civil defense workers picked up their helmets from the rubble beside them, put them on, and kept tugging at the debris.

We picked up a family, father, mother, son and daughter, who wanted a lift toward the west. They talked excitedly, all at once. The father explained he was evacuating them to relatives in the country, and would come back, himself, tomorrow. The wife said if he came, so would she. The boy, like the Dover kids, had spent his time counting planes, and was more thrilled at the experience than afraid.

“I got up to sixty before the bombs started coming down, and then Dad made me go down into our shelter,” he said.

The girl was seventeen or eighteen, and pretty. She had been in touch, through one of those school correspondence schemes, with a boy from Stuttgart. They had written regularly to each other until war had started.

“He used to write me that National Socialism was not bad,

and that all it asked of England was friendship," she said. "Of course I haven't heard from him for a year, but I guess he knows now how bad National Socialism is."

Bill and I reflected that at his age, it was much more likely he was being trained to pilot a bomber over England, or to run a tank.

The Germans were back again that night, guided by the murky, red beacon of flaming Dockland. They dumped their big loads of bombs into the fires, then banked back toward France for more. A few of the bombers came on, over the fires, to send their bomb loads crashing into the blackness they knew was London.

Bill and I toured Dockland again next morning. The onslaught of the day before had cost the Germans 103 bombers and fighters, but the damage done was appalling. Part of the docks were a smoking ruin. The charred wrecks of a few small ships still smoldered in the stream. The night bombers, aiming more or less blindly despite the fires, had pockmarked the streets of little dwelling houses with destruction.

The average poor man's home in London is not an impressive structure. It is one of a long row, touching its neighbors on each side. It is made of yellow brick which has become overlaid with the smoke of London. It is two stories high. In front of it are a few square feet of grass and bright flowers, and behind it a small garden. The garden in peacetime contained a few rows of vegetables, more flowers, perhaps a rockery and a fruit tree. In wartime its chief feature was the family "Anderson." The Anderson shelter, gift from the government to those who could not afford to buy one, was a corrugated iron kennel which its owner was supposed to sink two or three feet in the ground, banking its sides and top with earth. Each "Anderson" would hold four people, and

with a little ingenuity might even be made reasonably comfortable. Bunks could be put in, and an oil stove provided for heat. If improperly put together it became a prime breeder of colds and pneumonia.

When an ordinary sized bomb, say two hundred and fifty pounds, strikes one of London's small houses, it obliterates it, smashing it into the ground and scattering its debris for hundreds of yards. It wrecks the houses on either side. For many yards in every direction, the houses are pockmarked with fragments, wrenched on their skeletons, brickwork loose, windows and doors shattered, roof tiles torn away.

That was what had happened to street after street in Dockland. The destruction to human habitations had been nothing the afternoon before, compared to what the night bombers had done. In almost every street, little groups of people were trying to salvage what they could from a wrecked house or two, or were digging into the debris in the hope of finding someone still alive. Others queued up at the mobile canteens for a cup of tea or some hot soup. Others carried their belongings through the street, making their way toward somewhere where the bombers might not strike.

All the tenants of one block of small municipal settlement flats were being evacuated. A very large bomb had fallen in the courtyard, blowing a crater thirty feet across and almost as deep. The building was new, and had not collapsed under the shock, but great, gaping cracks laced through its brickwork, and it had a sagging, dejected air about it. It was unsafe. A cat sat on the lip of the crater and watched the tenants file out with their belongings.

So started the London blitz. Gradually it spread from an attack on Dockland to an offensive against the entire capital. Certain sections seemed to get more bombs than others, pos-

sibly because the German bombers, riding their beams in from east and south, came in at the same spots night after night. But most of the bombing was random, as anyone who lived in London during the blitz can testify. On clear nights the bombers flew very high. I have gone through cloudy nights, typical London winter nights when the banks of mist hover five hundred or a thousand feet up, when we could hear the Germans cruising around above the cloud layer, bombing through it at a city they couldn't possibly see. I remember another night when six great chandelier flares lit up the whole Thames from Blackfriars Bridge to Lambeth Bridge. Slowly they dropped in a long line, getting closer and closer to the ground, brightly illuminating a half dozen bridges, three railway stations, and most of the government departments. I was walking along the Embankment at the time, keeping an eye out for the nearest shelter. I could hear the beat of two or three planes, directly overhead, and it was obvious they were picking their target and preparing to “pull the chain.” Slowly the flares fell, until they struck the ground. The pilots just weren't interested in any target they could see.

The bombing of London, in so far as it aimed at any specific objective whatever, depended for results on the tremendous weight of bombs dropped, night after night. Some of them must hit something. In theory, the bombs which did no essential damage would serve to crack British morale.

The theory failed miserably. To a remarkable extent the power stations, the railroads, the bus systems, the telephone and gas networks, and the water supply continued to function. It might take you three times as long to reach the office as it had before, but you got there. And British morale, as

the world knows now, continued to soar with each night of blitz.

At first there were several alarms during each day, as the Luftwaffe battered away at the defenses. That was the hardest period, because the city was trying to adjust itself to a life of constant danger. It was not so bad during the day, because then the R.A.F. was on guard, and it had proved its mettle; gradually, people in the streets and offices began ignoring the sirens, going about their business until the planes were dangerously near. It was at night that things were worst, because the fast day fighters were grounded, there were almost no night fighters, and the anti-aircraft was pitifully inadequate against the relentless planes above.

The turning point came the Wednesday night after the blitz had started. Quietly, the authorities had concentrated every gun they could lay their hands on. When the first bombers arrived that Wednesday, they were greeted with a barrage several times as strong as before. It drove them up, harried them, and hurried their aim, even if it didn't knock many down. Londoners, listening through their black-out curtains to the thunder of the guns, felt that they were fighting back at last. It became much easier to sleep, even though the noise was twice or three times as loud. Riding to work on the bus next morning, strangers smiled at each other and said, “I say, did you hear those guns? Why, they've got a battery near me that . . .”

Three days after the first raid, I had gone back down to Charley Brown's to see how the district had recovered. The wrecked buildings were still the same unholy mess, and some of them still smoldered; but the rubble in the streets had been cleared away, the glass had been swept into little piles

in the gutters. People were boarding up the shattered windows of their shops, and usually they scrawled across them something like "Thumbs Up," or "Open for Business," or "We Can Take It." The Jewish second-hand man was cleaning out the front of his shop, taking the suits out into the street to beat big clouds of bomb dust from the fabric. I asked about his wife.

"Oh, her, I left her in the country," he said. "She didn't like this sort of thing."

As I walked on, he called after me, "Neither do I," and went back to prepare for his reopening.

No one person could attempt to describe the London blitz, because no one could hope to grasp the millions of personal experiences which went to make it up. All he can hope to do is to remember it as reflected in the things which happened to him.

Some of my most vivid memories of the blitz are connected with the observation post which the United Press established on top of the *News of the World* building, just off Fleet Street, where the office was located. The tower of the building was seven floors above the street, with an excellent view of central London and the city south of the river. Harry Flory had a telephone line run up to the tower, and anyone on watch could get the office by pushing a small button, and dictate a running commentary on whatever was going on. Sometimes the roof got pretty hot, and then you threw yourself flat with the *News of the World* roof spotters, hoping that the bombs would go over and consoling yourself with the thought that the tower was a very small target to hit.

Everyone took turns on the tower, including Miss Stronach, Flory's secretary, the teleprinter operators, the office boys, and even occasionally a visitor who happened to be in

the office and wanted to see the fun. There was always a tin hat handy, and when the sirens went, someone grabbed it and made for the roof.

My first experience was in daylight. It was a perfect afternoon for bombing, with lots of good cloud banks at 12,000 feet or so. When I first arrived on the roof, the air was full of the sound of motors, but we could see nothing. On a dozen other roofs within sight, men and women were scanning the sky with field glasses, ready to tell the working staffs down below to take cover, if they spotted planes coming close.

Suddenly, just south of the river, the planes appeared, sixty of them in close formation, heading in from the southeast. They had kept just inside a cloud bank, and now they banked, still in formation, and headed west. The ack-ack opened up, and it was accurate from the first round. The *News of the World* watcher, who had been in the act of telephoning a warning downstairs, told them never to mind.

The bursts were in among the planes, and the tail half of the formation veered off and started southward. From across the river came a series of explosions. Apparently at least one of the machines was in trouble and had jettisoned its bombs. The fleeing planes made for another cloud bank and disappeared.

Suddenly the ack-ack stopped firing. Above the heavy noise of the German engines could be heard the whine of Merlins, and then we saw the British planes, strung out in loose formation, streaking across the sky like a swarm of angry bees. We caught them in the glasses, and from their elliptical wings knew them for Spitfires. They tore into the formation, and the buzz-saw sound of the machine guns came down to us.

There were only a dozen Spitfires, against thirty or more

Germans. The Spitfires were everywhere, diving at the head of the formation and then zooming up for an attack on the tail. Suddenly it broke, and the German planes began fleeing all-out in all directions. Like most of those things, it was over too soon. I saw one plane losing height fast as it headed south toward the coast. It was out of sight before it finally crashed. We knew that other fighters would be waiting to intercept the raiders. I heard afterwards that nine planes from that formation had been shot down between London and the coast.

The most spectacular experience on the roof was at night. The whole sky of London lay above, and you could pick out the progress of the raiders as the concentration of ack-ack bursts moved from one quarter to another of the heavens. Usually two or three flares hung somewhere in the sky. Usually there were several big fires. Always there was the intermittent flash and grumble of the bombs. All the bombs seemed to be coming close when you were on the roof; there seemed hardly a moment when you couldn't hear one coming plunging down, somewhere within earshot.

I remember one night when two big fires, down east of the City, merged slowly into one, and the massive dome of St. Paul's stood etched sharply in black against a great burst of flame. It was light enough to read a newspaper, although the fires were more than a mile away. I remember another night when a shower of incendiaries hit all around us, almost without sound, and fifty little white hot gobs of light suddenly sprang up on surrounding roofs. There was a sound of shouting, and gradually they went out one by one as the roof spotters got to them and extinguished them.

Most spectacular of all the bombs were the oil incendiaries, some of which weighed hundreds of pounds. When they

struck, they threw back into the air great fountains of flaming oil, more beautiful than any fireworks. I remember one falling just beyond the courts of the Old Bailey, and for a split second the figure of Justice on its roof was silhouetted against the spray of flaming oil.

I remember the Sunday raid in which one German plane dive-bombed Buckingham Palace. As it zoomed up again a Spitfire got within range and shot it down. The crew bailed out. The plane came to pieces in mid-air, part of it falling at the entrance to Victoria Station, the rest on a roof nearly a quarter of a mile away.

Buckingham Palace was struck by bombs on two different occasions. Other bombs fell close by. It was never seriously damaged, but if it had been, the price would have been small to pay for the feeling of kinship which the bombs created between the average Londoner and his King and Queen. Their house had been bombed, too. It was that simple.

The British royal couple have an unusual air of humanity and decency about them. Friends have a hundred anecdotes about their unaffectedness, about the King's informality and the Queen's patent delight at some gift like a pair of precious silk stockings from America. Since the start of the war they had been living like all Englishmen, and a lot less well than the habitués of the luxury hotels. They stuck to their ration of clothes, and Her Majesty eked out the few new dresses with makeovers. They ate the same food allowance.

The blitz emphasized all their best qualities, in particular their humanity. Day after day they visited the districts worst hit, listening to the people's troubles and commending them for their bravery. Everywhere they left morale a notch higher.

I trailed the King one afternoon on a tour of East End

shelters. He drove up to the first shelter less than thirty seconds after a hit-and-run raider had dived out of a cloud and dropped a big bomb only a few hundred yards away. He was as cool as if nothing had happened.

The tour took him through a factory shelter, into the basement of a school, to a half dozen other places of safety for the small people of London. Everywhere it was the same process: intense interest in the kitchen and the medical ward and the other arrangements, a few unaffected words with the borough councilor or shelter warden or local A.R.P. chief, and a chat with a few of the people. They on their part seemed to feel they could talk to the King with equal frankness. An aged woman told him all about her rheumatism, and how it meant she must spend most of her time in the shelters. A hundred times that afternoon people called out to him, "God bless you."

It was a strange contrast to all the staged "acts" and phoney sentimentality which accompanied every tour of Adolf Hitler's.

CHAPTER 23

GRADUALLY, after September 15, the day raids petered out. Every so often a big formation came over under cover of cloud, but invariably it was cut to pieces. There were occasional hit-and-run raids by the fast fighter-bombers, who dove out of the clouds, dropped their bombs, and were back out of sight in an instant. Even they finally stopped, and the blitz became a routine of horrible nights and tired days. With three exceptions, as I remember, they were over London every night between the start of the blitz and my departure December 14. We knew each night they were coming, and we knew at what time.

Gradually the blackout hour got earlier, until it came soon after five P. M. A half hour later the Germans were with us again. By that time it was almost completely dark. First the sirens rose and fell. By the time they had died away, the thud of guns could be heard, and faintly the off-beat of the de-synchronized motors of the approaching planes. At first there would be only a few of them. The searchlights fingered across the sky, groping blindly and on the whole without success. As the planes advanced, a great pattern of bright shell bursts followed them across the sky, marching steadily along

with them as one battery after another took up the challenge. Sometimes the planes didn't bomb at first, but dropped a few flares on their big green parachutes. Then the machine guns went into action, and shot lurid streams of tracer bullets at the flares.

Then came the first bombs. Often they were great oil bombs, or showers of the little two-pound incendiaries, to create a beacon. The high explosives followed them once the fires were started. When the firemen heard them coming they dropped their hoses and fell flat, and when the bombs had exploded they got back on their feet and went back to work on the flames.

A bomb falling down through the night is one of the most terrifying things in the world. It starts up among the stars in a faint whisper, which gradually grows to a great undulating whish which pierces even the heaviest walls. You feel completely helpless as the sound grows all around you. If you are caught in the street, you lie flat; if indoors, sit tight. If the whish begins to diminish, you begin to breathe again because the bomb has gone over you and will land well out of range. If at the height of the whish the bomb explodes, it is almost a relief. It has been a near miss, but you are safe. Almost worse than the rest are the times when there is a slight tremor of the ground, then silence. That means a time bomb close by, with a fuse fixed to go off anywhere from five minutes to five days later. It must be located immediately, and the danger area evacuated until it can be neutralized and taken away.

The raids seemed to rise to periodic peaks, as new waves of attackers came in. Sometimes it seemed as if there were only two or three planes over London, and the ack-ack fire were a long way off. Then the throb of motors would begin

again, and the guns all around you would begin barking; shell fragments would begin falling back onto the streets and roofs, and the sky would seem full of planes. Once I saw one caught in a searchlight and hit, almost immediately afterward, by a heavy ack-ack shell. It burst into flame, dove slantingly then steeply out of the searchlight beam, and went down in a great ball of fire. Somewhere in the distance came a great roar as it crashed and its bomb load went off in one huge explosion.

Sometimes the raids petered out after midnight, but often they were at their peak three or four hours later. Once in a long while there was a night with no raid at all, and London had become so accustomed to them that something seemed lacking when there were no bombs. London had risen to the challenge of the blitz, and knew herself and her strength.

Most of the city spent the nights in shelter of one sort or another. In the working districts or the suburbs, it was the “Anderson,” or a doss-down under a solid dining-room table. Closer to the center, the shelter might be underground. The subway stations took care of thousands, and the two-tiered bunks became a feature of the platforms. In the subways and the big public shelters, admission was by ticket, and everyone had his favorite bunk. People everywhere tried to get to bed early, because it was seldom that they could sleep through the night. In the West End, the cabarets and hotel ballrooms, most of which were reasonably safe, did a roaring trade. In some of them you could get a cot for the night, included in the cover charge. Gradually, however, more and more people chose to go home, whistling up a taxi in the blackout if they could, but more often than not, walking and ducking into doorways if the barrage got too hot for them.

The big public shelters, where conditions admittedly were miserable at the start, housed thousands of people without homes to go to. They lived there with whatever was left of their possessions; each morning, they were forced to leave while the shelters were fumigated. In contrast were the shelters of the big hotels, which had soft mattresses or couches, sheets and pillows, and an air of complete gentility. Dowagers appeared in them in pink satin dressing gowns and lace caps, Mayfair society women wore their best negligees. There were all sorts of shelters between the two extremes. The only note of similarity in them all was the fact that in all shelters, regardless of social strata, almost everyone snores.

More and more people spent their nights in bed, on the theory that sleep was more important than complete safety. Being blessed with an apartment in a very solid building, I was with the latter group. I ended by getting more sleep during the blitz than during any similar period in years.

When morning broke on London, people straggled up out of their shelters, dozey from bad air and their restless sleep. The streets were a sad mess after a heavy raid, and the people in them looked fagged out. But they got to work somehow, and did their jobs, because it had become a matter of honor with them to beat the blitz.

Quentin Reynolds of *Collier's* and Bob Low of *Liberty* had an apartment in Lansdowne House, on Berkeley Square, which became a sort of unofficial blitz headquarters. Quent and Bob were very open-handed with their liquor, which is an excellent tonic in air raids. The building was massive and strong, and a good, underground restaurant where you couldn't even hear the bombs unless they struck very close. When they did land close, and the big building jumped

slightly on its foundations, Tim Clayton at the piano just signaled to his band to play louder, and everyone went on eating or dancing. After dinner, we usually went back upstairs and listened to the bombs come down, and argued about baseball. Quent is a great Dodgers fan, which is a real test of a man's steadfastness. I'm from Manhattan myself, so the subject was inexhaustible.

Lansdowne House was convenient as an evening base, because it was centrally located and we could get quickly to any “incident” bad enough to need quick coverage (it always struck me as a classic example of British understatement to refer to the effects of a 1,000 pound bomb as an “incident”). Usually, Quent's apartment was crowded, from eight in the evening on. And there were some nights when it seemed as if everything dropped on London were aimed in the general direction of Lansdowne House.

There was the night the oil bomb hit the rear end of the building. An oil bomb is a big canister full of the stickiest, most evil looking mass of highly inflammable goo that the mind of man has conceived. If it goes off, which it usually does, it sprays flame for many yards in all directions. If it is a dud, the thin casing bursts and everything around the bomb is smeared with dirty oil which is almost worse than fire.

The one which hit Lansdowne House hardly caused the building to tremble. Quent and I were finishing a couple of nightcaps, and noticed nothing until a little smoke began seeping under the apartment door. The bomb had set fire to a couple of apartments three floors below us and a hundred feet or so to one side, but the oily smoke was so dense that it quickly filled every corridor in the big building.

Quent and I started downstairs, leaving Bill Stoneman and

Arthur Christiansen, the able editor of the *Daily Express*, asleep in the two bedrooms. We had decided that the building would not burn down, that it would be funny to come upstairs after everything was over, wake them up, and tell them about it. Things didn't work out quite that way.

We stood in the street watching a little hose cart douse the blaze, surrounded by the weirdest collection of night clothing I have ever seen. Most of the people around us had been asleep and, awakened by the fumes, had gotten out post-haste into the street. There was a very rotund gentleman in a bright blue siren suit—the kind Winston Churchill wears—with a tin hat and bare feet. There was a woman in maribou negligee and lace cap. Several other women had their hair in curlers. There was a naval officer in flannel pajamas, with his gold-braided uniform jacket thrown over his shoulders. There was another woman with an evening dress slipped on over her nightgown, presumably because it was the handiest thing to the bed.

I noticed one woman with a fur coat over her pajamas who with rare presence of mind had brought along two more fur coats on her arm. Several people clutched jewel cases.

The fire was a bad show for such a turn-out, particularly since the sky around us glowed from a half dozen large blazes. It was rapidly being put out, and Quent and I started back to tell Bill and Chris all about it. At that moment they appeared around the corner, feeling deeply hurt.

Quent and I had not realized how thick the smoke was getting. Chris had awakened with his lung full of fumes. He had coughed his way through the apartment and awakened Bill. Together they had groped their way down five flights of blacked-out stairs, with the smoke getting thicker at every tread. By the time they reached the street, they were con-

vinced that the building was a goner, and that they had been left to their fate. It cost Quent another nightcap.

There was another night, a few days later, when a really big one struck very close. We were in Quent’s and Bob’s living room. We could hear just one raider overhead, and its motors seemed to be almost idling. Someone—I think it was one of the Canadian pilots who flew Lockheed Hudsons on the hellish Norway patrol—had just pulled the old bromide about “Must be one of ours” when the bomb was with us.

It came with a rush like a hundred squalls in one, sounding as if it were just outside the blackout curtains. Because it was so close it gave almost no warning. The explosion seemed to lift the entire building six inches, then drop it back with a great shudder. Every window in the room—fortunately they were swing windows—blew open. The blackout curtains billowed out into the night, and the room was full of wind as the air sucked out toward the blast. We could hear the branches of trees falling, down in the square, and for a minute or more, so it seemed, the glass from a thousand shattered windows kept falling to the pavement.

The rush of the bomb had started everyone moving, and the explosion seemed to have frozen them where they were. Three who had been sitting were standing. I, who had been standing by a glass connecting door, had impulsively tried to protect myself behind it. Quent, who had been standing, was sitting. Bill was halfway across the room, from some impulse or other.

“Dot vos ein bompf,” said Bob Low, quoting from Nat Gubbins’ *German Shelter Conversation*, which was very popular in London because it sounded so much like the back-and-forth in English shelters.

We turned out the lights, and looked out into the dust-

filled square. There had been two big bombs. The first had fallen in the street about two hundred feet away, killing two wardens sheltering in a near-by door. The second, which we had not even noticed, had wiped out an eighteenth century house on the opposite side. Between them, they had accounted for just about every window in the square except ours. Blast sometimes produces freaks like that.

Everyone had another drink, and one of the Canadians, who was experiencing his first air raid, admitted that bombs scared him to death. Coming from a man who had fought storms to Stavanger and back two nights before, and gone down through a hail of flak fire to let go his bombs, it made us civilians feel very fine and brave. It reminded me of the story, which was very popular with blitz-weary Londoners, of the soldier who got bored with the rural quiet of army life and tried three times to become a civilian, but was turned down each time because he couldn't pass the physical examination.

That was the night that Quent began composing a parody verse called “A Screaming Bomb Fell in Berkeley Square,” which unfortunately does not bear publication, and when one of the Canadians taught us the Coastal Command song which begins “All day long we flew below six hundred — feet. . . .”

It also was the night I sprained my ankle, trying to get down the ink-black stairs. It wasn't a bad sprain, and I got home all right with the aid of a cane left over from a sprain of Art Christiansen's a week or two before. I was in bed only three days. The only awkward part was what to do in event of the need to get elsewhere fast.

As I lay in bed each night, waiting for the raid to “hot up,” I began wondering whether it would be better to get down

into the basement immediately or to stick it out until it became absolutely necessary. You don't mind staying above-ground when both legs are in working order, but it's a little different matter when locomotion is a question of a series of unsteady hops. By the time I heard the first bomb coming down near by, it was too late to move to escape that one, and I would decide to wait a while, on the theory that there might not be any more. By repeating the process until I fell asleep, I managed to pass the evenings quite quickly.

This is the end of my own bomb stories. As a matter of actual fact, it is well over the quota. For the first few weeks of the blitz, everyone was eager to tell, and to hear, how close bombs had come, what so-and-so had said, how many cracks there were in the wall, and so on. You told them to the man next to you in the bus, to the military spokesman at the Ministry of Information, to your friends and your chance pub acquaintances, then listened politely to their stories. After that, people began edging away at the first mention of bombs. Pubs posted signs saying, “Don't be a Bomb Bore,” and by unwritten rule, nothing farther away from you than fifty feet was worth mentioning.

All the London correspondents had their narrow escapes. The man who seemed to be in on everything was Slim, who drove the United Press car. The difficulty of getting any sort of transportation late at night made it imperative to keep an automobile at the ready all the time. Slim drove it, all night, every night, between the office, the Ministry of Information, and various people's homes. Slim was a veteran of the fish and chips trade, who had moved on to cross-country bus driving and London hacking. The car was a small Ford which had borrowed a leaf from the French refugees and carried a mattress and a sheet of corrugated iron lashed to the roof,

for protection. Slim drove with a tin hat under the seat, but never put it on. Both he and the car throve.

Slim had a sixth sense about bombs. One night he suddenly whipped right, down a side street, and had not gone fifty feet when a big one landed right where the car would have been. He admitted he did not know why he had done it. He was also something of an expert on incendiaries, as all good Londoners were gradually coming to be.

I was out with him one night when a big shower of light thermite-and-magnesium bombs fell all around us. Slim stopped the car. He gathered up a couple of sandbags from a near-by doorstep, and doused two bombs in the roadway. He kicked one off some wooden steps. He was looking speculatively at one blazing furiously on a balcony when the residents of the neighborhood suddenly got to work.

A man appeared on the balcony, bathrobe flapping around his legs, picked up the bomb with a pair of fire tongs and dropped it into a cement areaway where it could do no harm. Someone began drenching another with water from a stirrup pump. Somebody else stuck his head out of a high dormer window, and poured sand on a bomb lodged in the rain gutter. Slim gave them all helpful advice, in a voice which was drowned by the barrage, and then as we drove off gave me a long commentary on their technique.

Slim also produced, one morning, the only bit of evidence that came my way of sabotage in Germany. Sabotage there has been, and it is growing, but the great strength of the saboteur is the difficulty of proving the act, and most of the stories circulating in London were liberally spiced with fancy.

Slim came into the office that morning with a piece of paper on which were three words of German, a language which of course he did not speak. He had copied them the night

before from a rough scrawl on a piece of German newspaper. The newspaper had been found in the fuse of a dud German bomb which had fallen near his home. It had been wedged in, he said, in such a way that the fuse failed to operate. The words were *Mit Zeitung Versehen*—“equipped with newspaper,” and the writer had added the name of a small German town which is a suburb of one of the biggest east German arms centers.

The blitz caught London largely unprepared, despite all the thought which had gone into the organization of civilian defense. Probably it was inevitable, because no one who has ever experienced a heavy raid can know what it is like.

For one thing, the authorities discovered that while the loss of life, and the bad wound cases, were only a fraction of what had been feared, the property damage was vastly greater. Fire is an even greater danger than blast, because blast has a definite limit to its destructive range while fire, unless quickly attacked, can multiply a thousand times.

The hospitals were prepared to handle far more cases than they got. Inevitably, most of them were hit more or less seriously. They carried on with superb bravery, transferring their patients each night to safe shelters, performing operations under fire, treating the thousands of cases of shock and providing shelter for the homeless. The ambulances operated regardless of conditions, their girl drivers pulling up for their loads of wounded outside blazing buildings which were sure to be a target for more bombs, then dodging high explosives all the way back to the hospital.

The civilian wardens had a thorough grounding in their jobs, and were able to carry on from the start, except that they found a thousand problems where they had been taught only a hundred before. They were in a sense the nerve center

of the whole defense system, operating in every street, the first to know of bomb hits, the men and women who located time bombs and evacuated endangered buildings, who called the other services to the scene, and who perhaps began rescue work on the spot because they couldn't afford to wait even a few minutes.

The rescue squads took care of the desperate business of removing tons of debris, cutting through steel girders with their acetylene flames, sawing at great timbers, driving tunnels through the masses of rubble where it was too dense to move, all to save a life or two which might still be flickering underneath. I remember one day when I stood on the rim of a big hole watching a group of men in blue overalls tug at a mass of shattered concrete which had been a communal shelter. I noticed a familiar set of shoulders on one of the men.

When he climbed up out of the hole for a cup of tea and a cigarette, I recognized him. He was Phil Scott, the English boxer. Phil Scott used to be something of a joke in New York, because he ended so many fights horizontally. I remembered writing some very funny remarks about him during the short time I was assigned to sports. There was nothing funny about Phil Scott as he put his big boxer's shoulders into shifting the heavy slabs which might cover someone still alive.

The heaviest strain of all fell on the fire service, professional and volunteer. Night after night they fought the blitz hours on end, its incendiaries, its high explosives, its escaping gas in the streets, its burst water mains. When the mains burst, it laid emergency lines if it could; otherwise it brought up collapsible tanks, and pumped inadequate streams from them; if neither was possible, it sometimes stood helplessly by and watched fire spread and spread, until it died out of

itself. The fire service fought not only the blitz, but civilian indifference which left thousands of buildings unguarded at night, the sort of indifference which devastated the London City area in the “fire blitz,” because it came on a week end and there were not enough watchers posted to spot the incendiary bombs and put them out while it was easy.

The fire service fought with the elaborate professional apparatus from peacetime, and with a big fleet of truck-trailer pump combinations full of worn-out men. It fought on sheer guts, using its bare hands if nothing else offered, twelve hours one night, then a few hours sleep, then twelve hours the next night again. When the men were out fighting the girls ran the stations, mobilized the available equipment, perhaps brewed a bucket of tea and took it to them on the spot.

I became a great fan of the station known as “The ’Ditch.” It was the Shoreditch Fire Station, deep in the East End of London. It lay in a badly battered area, one which was sure to get “its packet” every time London was bombed. Buildings next door had been burned out or hit. “The ’Ditch” was still unharmed. It was an ungainly brick building, of that indeterminate style common to fire stations in all countries. It had the usual wide doors for the apparatus, the usual brass pole, a cellar where those on call could sleep, a control room, and, on the top floor, a tiny canteen which, shortage or no shortage, managed some beer and a few cigarettes on all occasions. The station was very ordinary. Its people were not.

Gilly, who worked part-time—Friday and Saturday nights, to fill in while the regulars got a day off—was the only foreigner. She wore an “Australia” flash on her shoulder. The rest were all Londoners. Winkle and Bert came from farther down in the East End. They were engaged. Winkle, who is pert and pretty, should be a dress designer; her talent is West

End, not East. Bert is very useful with his hands; he likes to make ship models. He lost a leg later in that blitz winter, but that sort of thing won't stop Bert. Joyce, who worked in the control room, laughed constantly; she played the piano spiritedly, by ear, and was much in demand when the night was quiet and "The 'Ditch" adjourned to the pub across the square.

"Popsi" was pure West End. Her nickname came from Vienna. She had volunteered for duty in the East End when the war broke out, and wouldn't have traded it for Buckingham Palace. "Boy," who was Winkle's best friend, had a husband in the army, and didn't see why she shouldn't be doing something too. Carey, also West End, was known as the bravest girl in the station.

The rest of "The 'Ditch" were in character, ordinary Londoners united to fight a common enemy. They were a close-knit group. Any newcomer went through a period of probation before he was accepted with any degree of familiarity; it was unfortunate for him if he intruded on the others before his time. "The 'Ditch" fought the Nazi bombs with the same whole-heartedness and unity, completely typical of the capital of which it was a tiny part.

CHAPTER 24

GETTING back to central London from Shoreditch involved a trip on the London subway. The nearest station was Old Street, refuge of a few hundred lives gone smash.

Old Street Station is like a hundred others in London, two long tubes of concrete, each with a platform along its inner edge; a few openings in the masonry connect the two platforms, and give access to the stairs up to street level. The tracks are perhaps thirty feet below street level.

On each of the platforms was a long line of double-tiered bunks, ranged against the wall. They had been furnished by the government; each, by squatters' rights belonged to some particular person for the night. The bunks were light steel frames, with light wooden duckboards to lie on. A few of the better ones had canvas straps, and a few even real springs.

It was up to the people to provide their bedding. A mattress was a real luxury, but not really necessary; it became easy to sleep on just a quilt covering the boards, after your home had gone. Those who were wise hung a piece of burlap, or a bit of salvaged chintz curtain, at the head of their bunks. That shut out part of the light. After a few nights the trains grinding to a stop six feet away made no difference. And late at night they stopped, anyway.

In the early evenings, Old Street Station was a chummy sort of place. People chatted and poured one another tea, or consulted on the best means to stop the baby's toothache. Sometimes there was a sing song, or a concert by a few vaudeville headliners. By eleven o'clock or so everything had quieted down. The people lay cramped on their bunks, dirty blankets pulled over their faces or arms thrown over their eyes, and we who were waiting for late trains spoke in whispers, then wondered why we had bothered, when the train pulled into the station and nobody stirred. A few children tossed and whimpered in their sleep. A few old people lay with their eyes open, not moving. The rest seemed impervious to noise, and to the foul air.

Places like Old Street developed their community spirit. The people felt better with the same neighbors to talk to each night. I knew one widowed charwoman who, raid or no raid, went each night to the same subway shelter, “and a very nice one it is, in the West End, too,” because she had struck up a great friendship with “a gentleman who comes every night.” Friends who managed to eavesdrop assured me that the affair was quite proper, and that it was not “like some of these small shelters.”

People slept in the subways or in the big communal shelters elsewhere because there was no other place to go. A few camped in the open each night, in Epping Forest or somewhere on the downs outside London. Some were evacuated to country towns. The average Londoner resisted that, because he never could feel at home outside the capital.

Inside it, the homeless and the unprotected simply could not be taken care of. In part it was because nobody had foreseen, or could have foreseen, the tremendous, cumula-

tive devastation of the blitz. In part it was due to a grossly inadequate shelter policy.

The London shelters ranged from wet “slit trenches” and sub-surface tunnels just under the grass to big basements converted into dormitories. The trenches and tunnels were adequate as an emergency refuge for anyone caught in the open. They were not the sort of thing to spend a winter in. Next above them came the “Andersons,” which offered remarkable sturdiness and nothing more. Then came the street shelters, light brick affairs with a too-heavy concrete roof; they were built by the thousands, proof against blast and splinters, but completely vulnerable to a direct hit. Very few people trusted them, because the talk got around that the walls would give way with a near miss, and the heavy roof crash down to the floor. There were some basement shelters, most of them completely inadequate in sanitation, emergency equipment and other facilities. Many of them were closed at night, because they were in big office buildings which were normally empty at that time.

The blame lay chiefly on lack of experience. Boroughs like Finsbury, which had a group of progressive councilors, had disregarded official recommendations and built themselves efficient first-aid and shelter organizations. Most of the others had carried out instructions, and found themselves with shelters which were either woefully under-equipped or potential death traps.

I watched the rescue work going futilely on through one morning at a two-story local school building which had been turned into an overnight concentration center for bombed families. The school had been considered safe, presumably because it was quite new and built of light steel girders and

concrete. A big bomb had hit it, collapsing the entire building into the basement, where many people had been sheltering. There was almost nothing left aboveground, except a few weirdly twisted girders sticking up from the debris. The rescuers were digging out bodies when I arrived, and tunneling down into the tight-packed mass of ruin to search for anyone alive beneath. They realized, themselves, that there was little chance of it.

I remember another shelter, a dug-out under a small building, which had no adequate shield for its entrance. A bomb had landed just outside, and the blast had swept through the shelter, killing most of its handful of occupants. I remember another shelter, sturdily constructed and well fitted out, which was too close to a big water main. A bomb shattered the main, and the water gushed through a break in the shelter wall while frantic men and women fought for a chance at the single emergency exit.

There was another shelter constructed by a small laundry for the use of its employes during the daytime, and available at night for residents of the neighborhood. Its walls and roof were big concrete slabs, which the firm apparently had thought would be bombproof. A heavy bomb landed next to the shelter and dug itself deep into the earth before exploding. The explosion had acted on the earth like a 'quake shock. It forced in the unbraced concrete slabs along one entire side, and the roof came down when their support was taken from it. The people inside had used the shelter as a sort of club each evening, until they were ready to go to sleep. They had been playing a portable phonograph when the bomb hit. The explosion had forced the needle back across the record, leaving a deep scratch. The record was “Stormy Weather.”

Gradually, London began to discover what was safe. Bad shelters were condemned or reinforced. Good ones got sanitation and bunks and other simple necessities. Even the half-world of the subway shelters where the people slept packed together on the noisy platforms, became a little more respectable. London was adapting itself to the blitz, on the basis of bitter experience which would have shattered the morale of most cities.

Worst of all the shelters, at the start, was “The Arches” down in the East End. It was a great, cavernous freight depot of massive stone construction, whose ground floor had been turned into a haven for two thousand defenseless people. The moving spirits of the community were two wardens named Mr. Goldstein and Mr. Bubbly, an ex-merchant and an ex-auctioneer, who were doggedly fighting for proper sanitation, bunks, and some sort of feeding arrangement. At that time, they were making slow progress.

The ground floor of “The Arches” had only one virtue: it was safe. Three floors of heavy masonry were above it. Beyond that basic consideration, it had nothing to recommend it. It consisted of a long, cobbled driveway and a series of large, arched bays, their floors three feet or so off the ground, opening from it on either side.

The bays had been used in the past to store heavy goods until they could be carted off to their destinations. Most of them were now empty, and the stone floors were blanketed with family bedding, so close together that it was almost impossible to walk. Some of them still had goods in store. In one, there was a layer of the huge rolls of newsprint which feed a newspaper printing press; people had wedged their bedding into the hollows between the tightly packed rolls, and slept there each night.

The bays had one advantage: being raised off the ground, they were dry. Many people could find no room in them, and slept on the cobblestones of the driveway, which were damp. They slept surrounded by what valuables they had, a clock, a lamp or two and some spare clothes. If they had dogs or cats, they brought them with them. Each evening, before blackout, they started for “The Arches” through the streets of little houses, carrying their bedding or pushing it on a baby carriage or a wheelbarrow. They bedded down for the night. In the morning they must leave, to spend the day working if their jobs had not been destroyed, or to wait for the next night if they had nothing to do. The first time I visited the shelter I met two women who told me they washed themselves each morning in the Thames.

Everyone was frowsy. It was impossible to be anything else. The air was foul all night, except just after it was fumigated around midnight. The sanitary arrangements consisted of a few rows of portable, septic-tank toilets, which were emptied once during the night. There were a few dim electric lights. There was one small extemporized booth marked “first aid,” but when I entered it I found no instruments, no bandages, no water, and no attendant. One small mobile canteen was on duty each night, selling tea and crackers and cake, and the most indigestible of all English culinary creations, the “sausage roll.”

“The Arches” was nobody’s fault, to the extent that it was an improvisation. Gradually it got better, achieved bunks for the shelterers, toilets with running water, an efficient clinic, even a baby nursery and a loudspeaker system which broadcast music during the early evening—the last, thanks to Mr. Bubbly, who is a very persuasive man. The wonder was that during the worst of the blitz, when it was several levels

below the average modern cow barn, its occupants kept their morale and were as strong for licking Hitler as ever.

Central London, meaning the capital proper, got the great weight of bombs, but that didn't mean that the outskirts were neglected. I ran into a man one day who described his suburb, on the edge of the city off to the southeast, as one of “Goering's stepchildren.” I asked him what he meant, and he explained that the less venturesome pilots sometimes dropped their loads at the first opportunity and made off, and that some others, prevented from bombing while they were over the great mass of the city, jettisoned their bombs on the way home.

“We get what's left,” he said, “but it's a lot.”

I saw what he meant, one day, when I went down with Slim. The suburb was purely residential. The closest thing to a military objective in the whole place was a small brick and wooden railway station where more trains passed through than stopped. The town was just out of the “semi-detached” belt, and most of the houses stood alone on their own small lots, surrounded by a few trees and with a flower garden in the rear.

There had been four or five bad hits around the shopping center. One had knocked out what was reputed to be the town's best pub. A few dozen more bombs had demolished dwellings or sliced away a wall or two leaving them uninhabitable. The worst damage, however, was a half mile or so away.

A very heavy bomb, which certainly must have been intended for a worthier target, had been jettisoned over a new residential subdivision by some Nazi plane in trouble and anxious to get home. The houses, a hundred or so of them lining bare, new streets, were the type which would cost

\$6,000 or so in the suburbs of Chicago. Houses like that are not built to withstand blitz warfare. The bomb had landed between two houses, laying them open in great gaping wounds. Beyond them others looked loose-jointed, as if they had been wrenched and shaken until their teeth rattled. Farther on still, tiles had been shaken from roofs and window panes shattered. The small trees just planted along the sidewalks had been wrenched aslant by the blast. Gritty dust coated the fresh paint on the woodwork. *Kultur* had come to Suburbia.

So the blitz went on in London, inevitably smashing what was precious in architecture and wrecking thousands of lives. In Hyde Park there grew up a great dump of wreckage carted from the bomb sites, fragments of Adam mantels, keyboards of grand pianos, lengths of heavy gold picture frame, Georgian brick and splinters of Sheraton chairs from Belgravia.

A bomb burned out the interior of St. James's Piccadilly, one of the loveliest Wren churches in London. Another struck St. Paul's, which was his greatest creation. The statue of Richard the Lion Hearted, outside the Houses of Parliament, was riddled; the crusader king's sword was bent by the blast, but continued to signal the charge.

The Temple, a haven of peaceful walks, green shade trees and mellow old buildings, set in the busiest part of London, had been a haunt of Lamb and Thackeray and Goldsmith, and more recently of the British law. In a few nights it was half shattered. The end of the law library was blasted away. Crown Office Row, looking out over the trees to the Thames, was smashed. A big bomb tore at the Middle Temple Hall, where it is said Shakespeare himself once played in *Twelfth Night*. Gritty, indefinable gray dust, part dirt, part mortar,

part pulverized brick, lay thick on everything. Even the shade trees were gray.

Destruction of things like the Temple began to mean more and more to every American in London. I never realized how much it meant until one week end which I spent out of town. It was at Haslemere, halfway to Portsmouth on the south coast. Haslemere lay on the so-called “express route” to London; the bombers coming in from the south almost inevitably passed over it, riding their beam.

We finished dinner on the Saturday night, and just then we began to hear the first engines passing overhead. We went into the garden to watch. The night was crystal clear. One after another, spaced out at about a minute, the planes came in from the south. Beyond us, toward London, the ack-ack bursts danced in the sky, and searchlights groped back and forth. There was something relentless about the parade of planes, passing over us without giving us a thought and heading for London. There they would drop their bombs and smash a few hundred more lives. Suddenly I wished I were in London.

Prior to the start of the war, London had been just another European capital, more comfortable than most, less beautiful than some, impressive chiefly for its mass and for its air of power and dignity. I had never felt the affection for it that I had, say, for Paris or Prague. During the blitz London was steadfast. That is the one word which best describes it. I suddenly realized, that night at Haslemere, that London was home, as a foreign correspondent seldom finds it across the ocean; that it would always have a very special place in my memory; that it was part of me, or, humbly, I part of it. It was a very proud feeling to be a Londoner.

The Luftwaffe branched out in its search for an easy victim. It hit first on Coventry, then Southampton, and enriched the overstuffed German language with the word *coventri-zieren*, "to coventrate," which is as much a symbol for the destructiveness of the Nazi system as the fortuitous *quisling* is for the miserable whelps who sold out their own people to Hitler.

I saw both Coventry and Southampton. The technique had been much the same in each case, except that the Luftwaffe had become a little more expert at coventrating by the time it attacked Southampton, and the damage was even more appalling.

In each case, the Luftwaffe ignored the obvious military targets and smashed at the center of town, attempting to paralyze an entire community by one terrible blow at the heart. In each case the center was virtually obliterated. Fire and high explosives reduced whole blocks to rubble, twisting heavy steel girders like jackstraws, gutting what they could not strike down. In each case the city, lacking the stamina of massive London, groped drunkenly for a few days; then it came back, like London, a little more down-at-the-heel, a little grimmer, and much, much angrier.

Coventry and Southampton took it too, as many other English cities were to take it in the future.

CHAPTER 25

MY HOME leave, due after more than three years abroad, began to materialize. Harry Flory was to go at the same time. With luck, both of us would be home for Christmas, which I had not spent with my family for eight years.

While the days dragged slowly past, we waited in the priority queue for air passage to Lisbon. Then we spent three days on the south coast, held up by weather. Finally, on December 17, we took off in a big Empire flying boat, civilian sister of the Sunderland, which does the long distance convoy patrols and reconnaissance work. Halfway to Lisbon, while we were playing bridge, we passed a German reconnaissance seaplane. It took one look from ahead of us, and headed for the French coast.

The Captain came back into the cabin, grinning. "They thought we were a Sunderland," he explained. The Sunderland bristles with guns, and no German looks for a fight with it unless he has plenty of help alongside.

We picked up the Portuguese coast just north of Lisbon, and headed overland to the broad Tagus. The war-worn British plane in its chipped camouflage paint taxied to a stop next to two sleek, silver American Clippers. There was only one lap left, and then—America—home.

Thanks to the fact that Burke Elbrick had been transferred to Lisbon, I lived there not at a hotel but at his house in Estoril. That meant a certain detachment in observing the Portuguese scene, which for low comedy surpassed anything yet produced by wartime Europe.

Be it said that the Portuguese themselves contributed little to the furor. They were engaged in an entirely praiseworthy attempt to keep neutral. If the efforts were sometimes on the frantic side, they still were a minor element in the general confusion.

The lunatic fringe, refugees, businessmen on "missions," diplomats with vastly secret brief cases, two-bit transcontinental adventurers, embryo Nazi *gauleiters* and the usual collection of agents, were the chief actors.

Lisbon is a beautifully situated city, rising impressively above the Tagus along a thousand steep, cobbled streets. I had seen it once before, in peace time, and had been impressed chiefly by the clean streets, the cool-looking pastel houses, and the amount of free port to be obtained in one afternoon by going from one firm of English wine merchants to another, sampling their wares. The city had looked remarkably spacious and prosperous.

Probably it still was in December, 1940. It was difficult to find Lisbon under the flood of foreigners from a dozen countries which had engulfed it with the collapse of France. There were refugee Poles from Paris, expatriate Americans from the Riviera, Germans and Englishmen and Italians and Rumanians, and Jews from everywhere. Some of them were in Lisbon for purposes of their own, and had no intention of leaving. Others were held in suspension because it was difficult to get passage on the overloaded ships, or because they refused to take the risk of torpedoes (which was nil) and it

was next to impossible to get booking on the Pan American Clipper. The Portuguese fervently wished they would all leave, and were already devising a most elaborate system of visa delay to see to it that the absolute minimum of them arrived in the future.

Lisbon itself was headquarters for most of them. They lived in a dozen noisy downtown hotels, in a few hundred boarding houses, or if they had the money, in the palmy bower of the Hotel Avis. They crowded the cafés to a point where an honest Portuguese must have been afraid to enter. They pounded the crowded sidewalks from the American Consulate to Pan American to the American Export Lines and the various Portuguese shipping companies. Or they talked long and earnestly in outland tongues in the corners of café terraces.

Estoril, which is a pleasant seaside town at the mouth of the Tagus, about a half hour's drive from the city, took care of the upper crust. Its floating population was about evenly divided between suspected agents, people waiting for Clippers, people waiting for planes to England, Germany and Italy, and people just waiting because they could not make up their minds what to do. They lived at the Palacio, where the bar sounded like a League of Nations lobby, at the Atlantico, which according to hoarse whisper had been “taken over by the Gestapo,” and a dozen smaller hotels. They met on the beach, where their dogs fought or sniffed, at the Casino, where there were roulettes and chemin de fer and a continental version of the birdcage game. On the whole, they managed to pass one another by with admirable indifference.

At the Palacio bar, everyone suspected everyone else of eavesdropping, and acted accordingly. All concerned talked

either very gaily and loudly of nothing at all, or in the deepest and darkest of whispers. Why a man should be suspect in a bar, of all places, I have never discovered. Presumably he is there for a drink, and sinister designs, if any, have become only a secondary consideration. The Palacio bar, nevertheless, was nearly as drenched in suspicion as the Athenée Palace and others before it. I even thought I recognized some of the old faces, and wondered whether Bucharest had become a second-rate field for endeavor.

I was living with the two most harassed men in Lisbon. Burke Elbrick was then in charge of visas at the American Consulate. That meant that almost everyone who succeeded in reaching Portugal made a bee-line for his door and camped there intermittently for weeks or months, inquiring hopefully each morning if his authorization had arrived. Many of them had been doing it at other consulates for years. The only thing between Burke and insanity was a sturdy Dutch girl who went by the name of "Miss Pineapple," and who could say "no," in anything from a polite conversational tone to a commanding shout, in most of the known languages.

Unfortunately, nothing she did was more than a temporary stopgap. The people turned away one day were always back the next, leaning across the counter trying to get attention, shouldering against the newcomers who hadn't even made out their applications, brandishing steamship tickets they were about to forfeit, appealing to heaven in a dozen languages to intervene and let them quit Europe and the war. Miss Pineapple started off in the morning calm and very efficient. She ended in the evening like a fifth grade lady schoolteacher who has spent the afternoon trying to ride herd on a May Day school picnic. Burke was concealed in a small private office out of view but well within earshot of

the firing line, and since all the most complicated cases inevitably ended up explaining the situation across his desk, he got home at night in a state bordering on suicidal depression.

The scene at the visa office would have been good burlesque if it hadn't been so desperately important for the people concerned to flee Europe and get out of range of the Nazis. The scene at Pan American Airways was plain comedy from opening in the morning until the staff gratefully closed the doors on the last frantic traveler.

Someone suggested it be called Pandemonium Airways. Jack Kelly, who was trying to run a very businesslike, very efficient service under conditions of acute hysteria, would have subscribed to it.

Few of the people who wanted to cross with Pan American had any need to escape the Gestapo. All of them, without exception, felt they had some claim to a seat before anyone else. First there were the Americans who had been routed out of their French homes, and who did not care to cross by boat “because we might be torpedoed.” Some of them had been there for months, fighting for a seat on the plane against the steady flow of priority passengers, even though the boats left regularly on schedule and always arrived without incident.

The priority people went through with little delay because they were diplomats or military observers or important statesmen who could legitimately claim urgency. They departed in big loads twice or three times weekly, carted off by car from the Pan American front door while the unlucky besieging the counter inside threw them black looks and talked about suing the company.

There were people who tried to bribe their way on board, people who fired cables in all directions to bring influence to

bear, some who threatened and a few who tried the old come-on. They all ran into the fact that airmail had absolute priority, that winter head winds meant a drastic cut in pay-load, and that there were always enough important people to fill the plane twice over. Jack, who had to explain that a few dozen times each day, used to come home if anything a little more suicidal than Burke.

Those were just added complications over and above normal existence in Lisbon, which was complicated enough from the start. Any diplomat whom chance had stationed there could count, over a course of a few months, on entertaining a good percentage of all the people he had ever known plus a good leavening of complete strangers who had letters of introduction from old friends. Everyone on his way through wanted to be taken to the casino for some roulette, or the Wonder Bar, where everyone danced all night. Being able to eat a meal alone was unheard of.

By the time I left Lisbon, Jack and the Elbricks must have wished they had never heard of me. Most of the visitors at least occupied hotel rooms. I stayed at their house; at first it was to be two or three days, but in the end I stayed ten, including Christmas. I was in a sort of twilight zone between those who were sure of Clipper passage and those who had no hopes of getting it for weeks. One night I was all packed, ready to go next morning, but the swell at Horta, the villain of the transatlantic air route, began rising, and several of us were lopped off the passenger list. The cut came just after Harry and just before me. For once I wished Pan American did not insist on quite such a margin of safety.

I took the boat, sailing December 27 on the *Exeter* of the American Export Lines, a ship jammed 'way over normal

with refugees and Americans from the ends of Europe.

Quent, Ben Robertson, Red Mueller and Vic Bienstock of the JTA were also on board. The entire press contingent represented part of the overflow from the normal cabin space. We were bunked on cots in the ship's lounge with twenty-five other men, all of whom snored. Quent, who snores even worse than most, didn't mind, but the rest of us found it hard sledding. Ben Robertson threatened to write a book about the Export Lines, to be entitled “Ten Nights in a Goat's Nest.”

By New Year's Eve we were almost halfway across, and the celebration was memorable. Everyone had some reason to celebrate; either he was escaping from a Europe dominated by fear of Hitler, or he was going home.

The ship docked on the Jersey side January 7, 1941, with the skyline of Manhattan outlined sharply behind it against a perfect winter sky. I felt as if I were losing a life-long friend as I turned in No. 474503.

P O S T S C R I P T

WRITING a book has turned out to be a very hard job. It is the sort of job on which one should be able to concentrate, but concentration on past events has been impossible in a world where fresh, new incidents have crowded one on the other.

The job has therefore been unduly prolonged, and now that it is complete, it is far behind the times. The Second World War has swept far beyond the blitzes on London. The R.A.F. last night put one thousand heavy bombers over Cologne, devastating the city as London never was devastated in one night. Hitler tried to stab Russia when she was off her guard, as he has successively stabbed every nation he had grandiloquently called friend. But the Russians are suspicious people, and they were readier than he thought. As this is written, they are strong and full of fight, and their friends are no longer powerless to help. Japan has come into the war with her own peculiar brand of banditry and brutality. In doing so, she brought in the United States.

Last winter I stood on a cold dock in North Ireland and watched the first boatload of a new American Expeditionary Force step ashore. The emotions of the moment were almost too strong to bear.

I thought back to the refugees machine-gunned outside the settlement at Shanghai; to the Czechs who sang defiance while the Wehrmacht thundered into Prague; to the simple Finns who asked only to keep what they had, and who have been embroiled by Hitler in another war they never wanted to fight; to the gallant Norwegian nation, which has never surrendered; to the helpless Danes; to the fugitives streaming down the long French roads with blank despair in their faces; to the battered, steadfast Englishmen of the ghastly blitz months of late 1940.

That boatload of Americans was a symbol of something which all those people, deep in their hearts, had believed in and prayed for as the Nazi plague swept across Europe and Hitler's allies took courage from him and struck their own blows. That boatload meant that America was in and would stay in, and that a fighting machine could and would be built which Hitler never could withstand. It was an earnest of an offensive, some day in the future, which would carry the allied banners deep into the heart of Germany.

The blight of Adolf Hitler, directly or indirectly, has lain over most of the incidents recorded in this book, just as it has lain over the lives of more than a thousand million human beings throughout the world. It is not too much to hope that the blight is on the wane, and that with the final crash of Adolf Hitler the brutishness of his lesser satellites will be purged from the world as well.

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